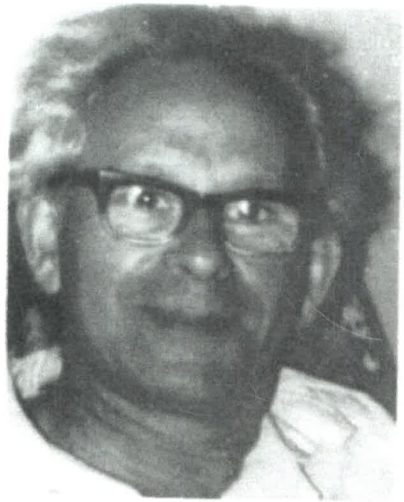

THE AUTHOR

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ISSN 0261–5649

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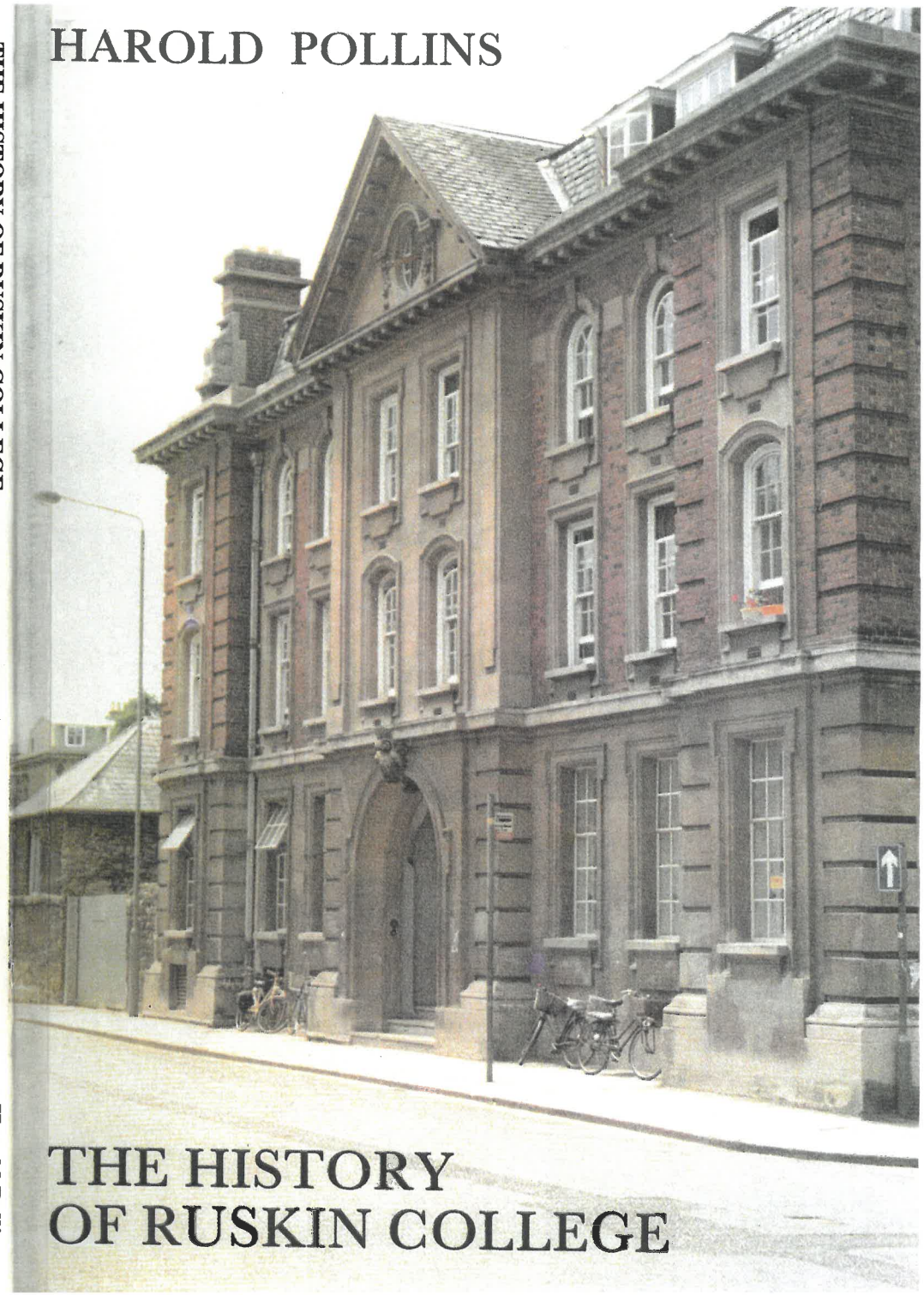

THE HISTORY OF RUSKIN COLLEGE

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by

HAROLD POLLINS

OXFORD

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1984

Ruskin College Library Occasional Publication, No. 3

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ISSN 0261–5649

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This pamphlet is the successor to *The story of Ruskin College* which first appeared in 1949 on the college's fiftieth anniversary. Although published anonymously it was written by the then Principal, Lionel Elvin. His successor, Bill Hughes, prepared two further anonymous editions in 1955 and 1968 which amended and updated the first version. The stock of the last edition is now exhausted and it was thought desirable to take the opportunity to replace it with a newly-written and longer effort. This proposal rested on the proposition that in recent years useful research has been published on the college's history and cognate matters. Moreover, the college librarian, David Horsfield, has been gathering together the college archives and has displayed great energy in collecting material, especially from former students. I am grateful to him, in addition, for his editorial advice and for his part in arranging for publication. Despite all this, the present pamphlet does not supersede *The Story of Ruskin College*. The latter contains information not used here and can still be studied with profit.

Publication within the college does not mean that this is an 'official' history. The selection of material and its interpretation have been left to me, but I have benefited from the comments made by my colleagues on the several drafts. Although it is invidious to identify some but not all of those who were particularly helpful, I should nevertheless like to thank Bill Hughes for his detailed comments, as well as his friendship over many years. Frank Pickstock provided me with the benefit of his extensive knowledge of the history of adult education and especially the role in it of the University of Oxford.

One group who collectively deserve thanks are the many former students—ranging from those of 1920 to the recent past—who responded to an invitation to supply information. Reminiscences, printed material, documents and photographs came to the college. I have gladly used some of it here although there was insufficient space to refer to it all, but often their suggestions gave notice of past events and conveyed something of the atmosphere of the college during their periods of residence. They provided, too, useful pen portraits of staff members. Many past members of staff are

described here, but I have not included accounts of my current colleagues' characteristics. A desire to retain their friendship is one reason; another is the lack of space—it is one thing to note the small numbers of staff up to the 1950s, but the expansion since then would require a much longer publication.

Harold Pollins

The History of Ruskin College

PART ONE: ORIGINS, UP TO WORLD WAR I

Introduction

Ruskin College came into existence in 1899. The advent of another educational institution in a university city need not have occasioned much interest. Yet, from the first news of the proposed college in December 1898 up to and beyond the inaugural public meeting three months later, local and national newspapers carried numerous items publicising and describing the proposed Ruskin Hall—as it was called in its first four years. Almost all welcomed it, although few went as far as the *Oxford and District Morning Echo*, which enthused, 'Hail, oh hail thou harbinger of the millenium.'[1]

The novelty of the new enterprise was a major reason for the positive response. This 'College of the People' or 'Workman's University' was intended to be different. It was to be a residential college for working men. They could spend a year there or they could come for shorter periods, joining at any time during the 52 weeks in the year that the college was open. While workers' education was not new the idea that they should undertake full-time study was quite novel. Previously residential courses for adults had been for short periods only; such were the 'Summer meetings' held from the 1880s at various universities, though mostly at Oxford and Cambridge, in connection with the University Extension movement, the major adult education activity of the late nineteenth century.

Ruskin Hall was to be more than a residential college. It was to be part of a nationwide movement in order to cater for the large number who wanted to study but would not be able to take time off work. Provision for them, women as well as men, would be in two parts: correspondence courses, and extension classes in their own localities taught by the Ruskin Hall 'Faculty' and by other lecturers.

This adult education movement was to have one more special feature: it would be associated with the organised labour movement. From the start the founders made great efforts to obtain the support of the trade unions and the co-operative societies at both national and local level—one of the first approaches was to the Oxford and District Trades and Labour Council. Connections of this kind were inherent to the purposes of the college. The idea was to educate working men in order to achieve social change.

It was a suitable time for such a new development in Britain. Many working men now had the vote and were already engaged in local politics. A few had been elected to Parliament. The trade unions were gradually becoming of greater significance, even if the 1890s had been a decade of difficulty and defeat for them. In 1900 the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labour Party, was to be formed. If workers were to have a greater say in the running of society, then it was essential they be equipped to play their part. In a published interview, just before the college opened its doors, Walter Vrooman, one of the founders, stated that, 'We wish to instruct the young men who one day may control the English-speaking peoples here and in America—to teach them how to control things . . . We have no 'ism' to teach, we have no party and no creed. The men we want are the leaders who aspire to be vestrymen, county councillors, members of Parliament, trade-unionists, fellows who harangue crowds in the street and who organize clubs.'[2]

In many ways, therefore, Ruskin Hall was to be different from existing educational institutions, and certainly from the University of Oxford. Indeed, the title of the monthly magazine which was issued to support the work of Ruskin Hall was *Young Oxford*, as though to distinguish it from the old. To emphasise the distinction traditional university subjects like Divinity or Classical Languages would not be taught. The concern would be with the social sciences so as to fit men to take a greater part in public life. 'Knowledge,' said Vrooman in a veiled attack on traditional university education, 'must be used to emancipate humanity, not to gratify curiosity, blind instincts, and desire for respectability.'[3] Moreover, since the college was for working men the fees would be low.

It could well be argued that a manufacturing or mining district would have been a more suitable location for this new educational movement. Yet Oxford was by no means inappropriate. By its very proximity the college would be a constant challenge to the old order. Moreover, within the university were a number of men, often radicals and socialists, who were sympathetic to the expansion of workers' education. They included Edward Caird, Sidney Ball, Rev. A. J. Carlyle, and Professor York Powell. At Oxford, it has been said, 'the "social problem" was in the air', not least at Balliol College where Caird was Master.[4] The revelations by Charles Booth and others of the degree of poverty in Britain led some to advocate social reform and on to socialism. Education for workers was an essential ingredient in their proposals. Although the Oxford

reformers were keen on University Extension that activity was in the doldrums. They were looking for something new, something that would attract more working-class people than did the extension lectures.

Yet it was not they who originated the Ruskin Hall scheme, any more than did the labour movement. The times and the place may have been propitious, but the actual timing and the choice of Oxford were fortuitous.

The founders were two young Americans, Charles Austin Beard, aged 24, and Walter Watkins Vrooman, aged 29, who had been in Britain a matter of months only. Both came from middle-class non-conformist backgrounds; both had a strong interest in social reform. Beard at the age of 18 had been joint editor of a newspaper owned by his father, had then studied at DePauw University, Indiana, and had graduated in 1898. He came to Oxford in the autumn for further study, as a non-collegiate student.[5] Vrooman, in the tradition of his family, had been actively engaged in reform and radical politics. Because of ill-health he had not attended university, but from an early age was well known as an agitator and public speaker: he was described, when in his teens, as the 'boy orator' in the 1888 study, *The working-class movement in America*, by Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling. He had married the 47-year old Amne L. Grafflin in 1897 and a year later, as a break from politics and from a law-suit involving his wife's inheritance, they came to England, apparently on holiday, although he also registered as a non-collegiate student.[6] Beard was an acquaintance of one of Vrooman's brothers, and he and the Vroomans met in Oxford. There they produced the idea of a new educational movement.

They came together no earlier than the autumn of 1898 and by the beginning of December the new scheme was being publicised. There is no firm evidence that either Beard or Vrooman had come to England with such an idea already in mind. They were probably influenced by the discussions about reform and workers' education indulged in by some of the Oxford dons (one of them, York Powell, was Beard's tutor). The sequence of events appears to be that having thought up their scheme Beard and Vrooman then went out to get support from sympathetic Oxford people. The most likely interpretation is that the non-academic Vrooman was the originator. In his short life (he died in 1909, aged 40) he came up with all manner of schemes, political and educational, usually produced rapidly, and often without much consideration of their practical applicability. It is quite consistent with his character that he should have been

intimately concerned with American politics early in 1898 and a few months later have produced a new educational development in Britain.[7] The part played by Charles Beard—later to make his name as a major American historian—is less certain, but he claimed to have suggested the college be named after John Ruskin during discussions held in his lodgings with some of the Oxford sympathisers. They had in mind Ruskin's influence as a friend of labour and critic of contemporary society rather than as an artist.[8] John Ruskin, then near the end of his life—he died in 1900—was told of the development and gave it his blessing.[9]

It is a passing curiosity that a pioneering educational institution in Britain should have been established by visiting Americans and be named after someone who had nothing to do with it. Although associated informally with the labour movement it originated not from it but from middle-class reformers. Its beginnings were clearly rooted in the particular conditions of the time, but it survived and indeed flourished in the subsequent different environment. Its example was taken up by others, so that today there are in Great Britain eight long-term residential colleges for mature students, the most recent—the Northern College—having been founded in 1978.

The First Ten Years

The Ruskin Hall scheme got off the ground with extraordinary speed. Within less than half a year an idea became a reality. Fortunately, the founders did not have to worry about money. Mrs. Vrooman was a rich woman and she supported her husband's various schemes: almost all the money for the first year's operation came from her. The founders, released from that problem, were busy drumming up support, addressing meetings in many parts of the country, trying to interest in their scheme trade unions, trades councils, co-operative societies, church organisations and Ruskin societies. They were so successful that on 22 February 1899, no more than five months after the Americans had arrived in Britain, a grand inaugural meeting was held in Oxford Town Hall. Appropriately it was George Washington's birthday. Five days later classes began at Ruskin Hall, located at 14 St Giles, in a building leased from Balliol College. It was a suitably symbolic site. The premises had formerly been the house of Professor T. H. Green, whose ideas had been a formative influence in changing Oxford attitudes. And the building had been used to accommodate non-collegiate students, an early step in the widening of the intake into the university.

The close connection with the labour movement was indicated by

the appointment of trustees at a meeting in the afternoon of 22 February. Among them were Ben Tillett of the Dock Labourers' Union, C. W. Bowerman of the London Society of Compositors and a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, A. Sellick of the Engineers and W. Millerchip of the Co-operatives.

Ben Tillett was called back to London and was unable to attend the evening meeting at the Town Hall.[10] The main hall was filled to overflowing, the walls bedecked alternately with the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes. Professor York Powell, the chairman, speaking for its few well-wishers in the university, welcomed the new college. Much greater support was announced by George Snow, Secretary of the Oxford Trades Council, who read out a number of letters and telegrams of support. One was from Keir Hardie, Chairman of the Independent Labour Party and editor of the *Labour Leader*. (In that paper, in the course of appealing for funds for electioneering purposes, he offered 'six months free residence and training at Ruskin Hall' to the worker who collected the largest sum in proportion to his union branch membership.)[11]

George Snow, a printer, who had been elected by the Oxford Trades Council to attend Ruskin Hall, also read out a list of 38 organisations represented at the meeting—trade unions, trades councils, co-operative and socialist societies—with a combined membership of over 300,000. Ben Tillett was to have made a speech welcoming Ruskin Hall on behalf of British workers. In his absence James Sexton, General Secretary of the National Union of Dock Labourers, addressed the meeting.

Charles Beard conducted the first (and only) 'matriculation' ceremony when some 70 to 80 men (some to be resident, others in the correspondence classes) stood up and were addressed by him. 'It is my duty as secretary of Ruskin Hall to thus formally admit you to membership and fellowship in that institution,' followed by 'a few words of advice and encouragement'. Vrooman spoke for an hour, rejoicing in the enthusiasm the project had received—over 400 students had already registered for the correspondence courses. In a somewhat rambling speech he reiterated the need to be critical, and emphasised that scholarship should be combined with action to change institutions, not just condemn them.

By this time the staff had been appointed. After one or two changes the full-time teaching staff—called the 'Faculty'—settled down to consist of four men at the Oxford Hall. (There were also several part-time teachers). The Warden (in 1903 renamed Principal) was James

Dennis Hird, formerly an ordained minister in the Church of England who had fallen out with the church authorities. Indeed he was virtually an atheist—which makes his selection by the founders a little curious. Their political and social views were undoubtedly in consonance, but his criticism of religion did not at all conform to the beliefs of Vrooman who, on his engagement to Amne in 1897, was described as 'a clergyman and politician'.[12] The Sub-Warden was Bertram Wilson who had been connected with a Labour Church in the Potteries. The third was Alfred J. Hacking, who came increasingly to devote his time to marking correspondence course essays and thus taught less at the college in Oxford. The fourth member was Hastings B. Lees Smith. He had been associated with the founders while still an undergraduate at The Queen's College, before graduating in the summer of 1899. He probably took up the post of General Secretary of Ruskin Hall after that; it also involved teaching duties. In 1903 he and Wilson changed roles, Lees Smith becoming Vice-Principal and Wilson General Secretary.

There was a ready response to the Ruskin Hall scheme. It aroused great enthusiasm in many parts of the country, especially in the industrial areas, with as many as 96 classes in existence by 1902. In the first two years some 1,800 correspondence students were enrolled, and local Ruskin Halls were established—often with the help of local organisations—in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham (where there were two), and Stockport. There was talk of other Halls being set up, including one for women, but nothing came of it.[13]

Inevitably there were teething troubles, even though consideration had been given to some matters. For example, fees for tuition and board at Ruskin Hall were kept low at £31 p.a. or 12s 6d per week, the small figure being due to the fact that all the domestic cleaning and cooking were to be done by the students. (Even so, £31 was about a quarter of a skilled man's annual wage.)[14] But how would such duties be organised? Moreover, since students could come for periods of one month and they arrived at odd times throughout the year, how would the teaching be programmed for a procession of students? What kind of students would be able to get time off for full-time study? What was the structure of the whole enterprise? What was the relationship between the Oxford college and the local Halls?

Some answers were given quickly. The students rapidly worked out their own 'Regulations for the Domestic Organization of Ruskin Hall'. This included regular meetings of the student body in a House Meeting (the name still survives) with three elected delegates acting as the executive. They allocated jobs to the students, administered

fines for non-observance, and acted as liaison with the Faculty. It soon became apparent that it was not efficient for students to do all the domestic work. Student cooks were seldom adequate and in 1901 a cook was appointed, followed six years later by a matron to supervise domestic arrangements. In 1913 the weekly scrub of the whole building was abandoned when the first part of the purpose-built premises was opened, but a few domestic duties remained.

Some problems took a little longer to resolve. In the first year or so many of the students who came were certainly not those for whom it was intended. Foreigners came for short periods to learn English. Others, delinquents of some sort, were sent by their families to keep them occupied.[15] Edmund Stonelake, a Welsh miner, who came in August 1901 for a few months, described how: 'One afternoon a cab drew up at the door and a nicely dressed young man stepped out and the driver discharged a considerable quantity of luggage. I was in charge that afternoon. The young man obviously from one of the Scandanavian (sic) countries came inside and tried to make me understand that he was a new student but when he saw the clean but bare boards on the floor and the staircase, he was out through the door again in less than five minutes.' One student, mentioned by Stonelake, was a 'breezy fellow . . . flashily dressed, with loud yellow shoes and red tie complete. He appeared to be fairly well off financially. "What the H-- is to be done here lads" was his attitude. He spent most of his time on the river and elsewhere and after the Principal called his attention to this he did not stay long.'[16] The Faculty had to turn down a request from one man who wanted to stay at Ruskin Hall, but not attend classes. The place, it was emphasised, was not to be a lodging-house. The students were not all like this. One of the earliest, in the first year, was Joseph Pointer, a patternmaker, who stayed six months and subsequently became Labour M.P. for the Attercliffe constituency in Sheffield from 1909 until his death in 1914.[17] In any case, increasingly, students of the requisite kind came to the Hall, often recruited through the correspondence classes or sent by their unions.

Some of the organisational difficulties were settled, for the time being, in 1900 when a formal constitution was promulgated. (The Articles of Association stated that men and women would be admitted, but the latter did not come to the college until 1919.) From 1900 there was a Council consisting of a number of public figures, including some from the labour movement and some from Oxford University. However, the provincial Ruskin Halls tended to have their own existence and Charles Beard also acted independently. He

had gone to America late in 1900 to get married, and had returned in the spring of 1901 to take up residence with Mary Ritter Beard, an early feminist, in Manchester where they were acquaintances of the Pankhursts.[18] Charles Beard was in charge of the Ruskin Hall Educational League, primarily responsible for the external activities. Similarly, the magazine *Young Oxford* was not under the control of the Council or the Faculty, and its articles attacking the university and religion caused much difficulty for the Council.[19]

The major problem was finance. The 1900 arrangements brought to an end the college's dependence on Mrs. Vrooman's munificence. In future she would provide £500 a year for four years, compared with expenses in the first year of almost £3,000, of which she had provided two-thirds. By this time she and her husband were back in America.

It is quite possible, in view of her later association with the college, that she would have continued her financial contribution beyond 1903 but in that year she and her husband were getting divorced and she was in any case temporarily embarrassed by his profligacy with her money. For the college the end of her subvention introduced a period of acute financial difficulty and some of the events which make 1903 a turning point in the college's history, may be attributed to that difficulty. As well as moving to its permanent site in Walton Street and changing its name to Ruskin College it began to abandon its outside activities, apart from the correspondence courses, which lasted until 1964. The provincial Halls and local classes began to close, partly because their function was beginning to be performed by the newly-formed Workers' Educational Association, by local education authorities now providing evening classes in non-technical subjects, and—later—by the expanding provision for adult education by the universities. Moreover, Charles and Mary Beard had returned to America in 1902. But undoubtedly a major reason for the retrenchment by Ruskin was the lack of money.

Vrooman had hoped, early on, that the co-operatives would take responsibility for the college, but nothing had come of that. Instead, efforts were made to raise money from two sources: sympathetic, rich benefactors, and the labour movement, especially the trade unions. Dennis Hird, for example, in 1902 arranged a drawing-room meeting for wealthy people at Lady O'Hagan's[20] and approaches to the Trades Union Congress and to individual unions produced some response. In the first few years most money came from the private patrons and although the staff generally raised money the greatest effort was made by Bertram Wilson, the General Secretary. He sent out numerous appeal letters, employing people to write the letters at

one penny a copy.

Most of the money came in small amounts, only a few donations were of £52 for a full year's tuition and board, or £26 for half a year. The sums were aggregated and offers made to trade unions to send a student (usually, the union would be offered a scholarship of £26 provided the union supplied the other £26). A few contributors were worried that the students were socialists or were being taught atheism. Lord Rosebery, for instance, who was supporting a student wanted to know if he were a socialist. Despite Wilson's soothing answer—including the laudable point that he had not asked the student for his political views, since Ruskin took 'a neutral position with regard to politics'—Rosebery eventually withdrew his support.[21] But most of the benefactors merely provided money, without any preconditions.

Without this money the college would not have survived, despite the fact that the labour movement was increasing its contribution so much so that by 1907 more than half the total came from trade unions, and some from the co-operatives. The greatest support came from the Engineers, but other main union contributors were the Weavers, the Northumberland Miners, the South Wales Miners and the Railwaymen. The students were sometimes selected by the Faculty, often by the various unions, and as the funds increased so did the number of students, the majority being working men and trade unionists. More of them came, as many as 50 being in residence, and extra accommodation had to be obtained. Two houses in neighbouring Worcester Place were rented, two students in each being placed in charge, designated 'Prefect' and 'Vice-Prefect'.[22]

Thus by about 1906 and 1907 the college's prospects seemed to be much brighter, but this improvement was accompanied by rising tensions within the college, to culminate in overt conflict in the Spring of 1909.

The 1909 Strike[23]

On 26 March 1909 the Ruskin student body went on strike in support of Dennis Hird, the Principal. Three weeks earlier, on 6 March, he had been asked to resign by the college's Executive Committee on the grounds that he had not kept discipline. As A.J. Carlyle, the Executive's Honorary Secretary, put it in a circulated letter of 2 April explaining what had happened, the 'present disorganisation' in the college had been due to Hird's being 'at variance on matters of general policy and administration' with the Executive and with other members of staff. Hird had submitted his

resignation on 12 March, but this had to be confirmed by the full college Council, due to meet on the last day of the month. Surprisingly for such a small college the demand for the Principal's resignation and his acceding to it were apparently unknown to the students until Hird told them on the 26th; the strike was their immediate response.

They drew up a six-point plan:

1. All lectures with the exception of Mr Hird's to be boycotted.
2. All house duties to be carried out as usual.
3. The strike committee to form classes among the students in accordance with the curriculum.
4. Should any student or number of students be victimised by any member of the Faculty or Executive Committee, all the students will leave in a body.
5. That the withdrawal of Mr Hird's resignation be demanded.
6. No student shall allow himself to be interviewed by any member of the Faculty or Executive Committee, and all matters between students and staff to be dealt with by correspondence.

This scheme was then reproduced in hand-written documents, several of which survive. Each striking student wrote out the six points and also the names of the striking students in the traditional round robin style. In this way they committed themselves to support the Principal.

The news soon got into the newspapers whose reports—some coming from the students—were not unsympathetic to the strikers. Nevertheless the college Council, meeting at the House of Commons on 31 March, endorsed the Executive's action.

The strike continued until 7 April when the college was closed for a fortnight. The students demanded and received return fares and boarding expenses. They were required to sign a document accepting the Council's decision about Hird's resignation and to obey the college's rules, if they wished to return. The students then dispersed. W. W. Craik, one of the participants, later wrote that this scattering of the students may have been a ploy by the college to separate the students who, in isolation, might lose interest in the affair. In fact, the effect was to enable some of them to lobby their own branches in different parts of the country. This propaganda effort, Craik notes, was thus undertaken with expenses paid by Ruskin College.[24]

On 20 April 44 of the 54 students returned, but the dispute continued. The majority of students were of Craik's mind although 16 of the former strikers formed themselves into a committee to

defend the college. A battle of leaflets and pamphlets ensued, containing accusations and counter-accusations, and full of contradictory statements. The majority of students were associated with or sympathetic to the Plebs League, formed, as we shall see, in the previous year to press for changes at Ruskin. In August the League decided to set up their own institution and on 8 September the Central Labour College was opened in Bradmore Road, Oxford. Many of the dissident students transferred to it. On the following day Ruskin opened with 31 students. By this separation the strike episode came to an end.[25]

In his history of the Central Labour College, published in 1964, W. W. Craik, who was later Principal of the Central Labour College, notes that during the strike they had to counter the suggestion—made in some newspapers at the time—that 'in striking against the enforced resignation of the Principal and in demanding its withdrawal we were indulging in a purely emotional form of personality worship'.[26] One can readily understand their support for an undoubtedly popular and accomplished teacher. Obviously there was much more to a dispute which could lead to the establishment of a separate college and, subsequently, to many years of bitter hostility between the two main organisations in adult eduction. The National Council of Labour Colleges (1923–64), an offshoot of the Central Labour College, regarded the Workers' Educational Association—with which it included Ruskin in a minor role—as supporting the existing economic and social system in the guise of 'neutral' education. The WEA dismissed the NCLC's teaching as mere class-war propaganda and not education at all.

As the precursor of these two opposing approaches to workers' education the Ruskin strike of 1909 has been subjected to numerous descriptions and analyses. Thus it has been said that Hird was sacked for teaching socialism, or he was sacked for teaching atheism, or the students wanted to turn Ruskin into a marxist college. As against this emphasis on the content of teaching—and there is certainly no doubt that many students objected to the kind of economics they were being taught—the argument at the time centred on the issue: who should control the college? The student case was published in *The burning question of education*, which argued that the college should be handed over to the labour movement whose representatives should comprise the governing body. Only in this way could it properly be called a labour college. This would put an end to a Governing Council and an Executive Committee which included university dons and private benefactors, and would replace them with people from the labour

movement. What was happening, and what had brought matters to a head, was the contrary trend. A number of events in the years immediately before the strike were interpreted by many students as leading to much closer connections with the university and thus to control by it. Indeed, Chapter 3 of Craik's history of the Central Labour College is entitled: 'The University's Take-over Bid for Adult Working-class Education'. The university's greater interest, at this time, in working-class education was, to the students, one suspect move. The other was the various changes within Ruskin which were seen as linking the college more closely to the university and as preparing the way for its incorporation in the university. 'What the students were concerned about,' wrote Stan Rees, one of the striking students and later a NCLC organiser, 'was that the orthodox educationalists were wooing the College away from the Labour Movement.'[27]

With the object of improving the college's educational work revision (test) papers were introduced in 1907, along with an attempt to relieve Hird of his teaching of sociology, evolution and ethics (said by Lees Smith, the Vice-Principal, to have been used by Hird as vehicles for atheism). Instead, it was intended that he should teach temperance. All the students in residence signed a petition which the Executive accepted and Hird continued with his previous teaching. They were unable to prevent the implementation of the revision papers policy, but many refused to sit them. However, the students were successful in watering down a new rule, introduced in 1908, which would have severely restricted students speaking at public political meetings, the college's official position being that, by its Articles, it was non-political.[28] Since university dons were also now teaching Ruskin students, it was easy for suspicious students to conclude that the purpose of such changes was to bring the college into line with the university.

Within the university there were moves too which the students found suspicious. A number of dons, anxious to widen the scope of the university's intake, partly as a way of reforming the university, partly to provide education for future labour leaders, included in their discussions possible means to assist Ruskin. These included grants to the college, the endowment of lectureships in applied economics and in politics, the lectures being open to Ruskin students free of charge, and the proposal that Ruskin students should be enabled to sit the University Diploma in Economics. The culmination of these various proposals was a report issued in December 1908, *Oxford and working-class education*, produced by a joint

committee of the university, the WEA and Ruskin College. The main consequence of their deliberations was the establishment of a joint committee of representatives of the university and of working people which was to be responsible for the conduct of tutorial classes. Ruskin was only a small part of their considerations, but its existence had been important in demonstrating that working people were quite capable of undertaking advanced study.

It is ironical that while many Ruskin students objected to these developments, seeing in them attempts to take the sting out of the labour movement by instilling, through education, ideas of moderation and respectability in the minds of future labour leaders, the impetus for such changes within the university came from those who wanted to reform it—men like R. H. Tawney, William Temple and Sidney Ball. Moreover, A. J. Carlyle claimed in his letter of 2 April that 'the Socialist (and almost the only Socialist) representatives on the Council' were the university dons. For the students the university was to be shunned because all its teaching was permeated, inevitably, with class bias. It was the opposite view to that expressed by J. M. MacTavish, a Portsmouth shipwright, and later General Secretary to the W.E.A. At a conference in Oxford in the summer of 1907, under the heading 'What Oxford can do for working people', he declared, 'I am not here as a supplicant for my class. I decline to sit at the rich man's gate praying for crumbs. I claim for my class all that Oxford has to give.'[29] It was this conference which appointed the committee which produced the *Oxford and working-class education* report.

The dissident Ruskin students did not see things that way: working-class education should be independent. In October 1908 a number of present and past students established the Plebs League in order to pursue that objective, to put Ruskin on the right track by 'a definite and more satisfactory connection between Ruskin College and the Labour Movement'. Hird was invited to be editor, but the invitation was only a courtesy, wrote Craik; they did not expect him to take it up.[30] However, the college Executive was fearful of the phrase 'labour movement' on the grounds that it included political parties and not just trade unions; the College was supposed to be non-political.[31]

The opportunity was taken by the Executive to appoint a sub-committee in November to examine all the current problems at Ruskin. It received evidence from members of staff and former students and produced a report. It was this report that led to Hird's enforced resignation.[32]

The brief report was in fact conciliatory. It exonerated Hird from

the charge of teaching socialism and atheism: so much for the statement that he was dismissed for teaching socialism. On the contrary the sub-committee stated that the economics teaching was 'one-sided and mainly critical of socialism'. They recommended that 'the Executive should supplement the present teaching by obtaining the services of some economist who is more familiar with economics from the standpoint of the labour movement'. At the same time Hird did not escape the censure that he had not kept discipline. They further recommended that his practice of selling produce from his farm to the college should cease.[33]

The report was due to be discussed by the Executive on 6 March, 1909. In his autobiography H. Sanderson Furniss, who had been appointed in 1907 to teach economics in place of Lees Smith who had obtained a chair at the University College of Bristol, wrote that 'a majority of the members of the Executive Committee had made up their minds, before the meeting . . . to ask us three [sc. Furniss, Wilson, and C. S. Buxton, the Vice-Principal] to resign'. Lees Smith, now chairman of the Executive, got them to change their mind. Instead Hird was asked to go.[34] Almost three weeks later the strike began.

It is plain that a simplistic analysis of the strike will not do. The students did not want to make Ruskin a marxist college: during the strike they formed classes 'in accordance with the curriculum'. It is true that many of them objected to the conventional economics they were being taught. And while Furniss had made a point of studying marxism and including it in his teaching the students complained of his 'distortions' and began to read Marx themselves.[35] Similarly there was nothing inevitable in Hird's dismissal, if Furniss's account is accurate. It looks as though a major factor in the dispute was the personal antagonism within the small staff. Lees Smith, Buxton and Furniss were opposed to Hird, as the bitter comments in Furniss's autobiography document. Hacking, too, although having little to do with the residential work of the college, came in for criticism. It is noteworthy that the argument which has been put forward that the college could not become a labour movement college because of its reliance on the financial contributions of rich benefactors has to face the fact that soon after the strike the college's structure was changed in the direction the students had demanded.[36] Similarly their view that the attempt to relieve Hird of teaching sociology was part of the scheme to fit Ruskin into the university's teaching pattern—that subject was not taught at Oxford—is unsupported by the college's continuation of that subject after the students began to sit the

university Diploma.

A proper understanding must take into account the fact that after Lees Smith left in 1907[37] an experienced teacher was succeeded by two men—Buxton and Furniss—who had done very little teaching (Buxton was very young; Furniss, being almost blind, had not previously done much employed work). Their inexperience, no matter how conscientious they were, must have added to the difficulties at the college. None of which is intended to mean that the issue of independent working-class education was not a real one. But it does suggest that in different circumstances and with different people the problems might have been handled without an overt dispute.

After the Strike, 1909–1914

The impact of the strike on Ruskin itself was dramatic and fundamental. No institution could go through such events without being greatly affected. In the short period between the strike and the outbreak of war major changes were effected which provided the basis of the college's structure and work for the next 60 years. In particular, the college's government was altered and the pattern of teaching became related to the requirements of the Oxford University Diplomas.

The first task was to recruit staff. Hird had gone and Buxton, the Vice-Principal, left at the end of 1909, somewhat disillusioned with Ruskin and with socialism, ready to fight the next general election as a Liberal candidate. The following year Bertram Wilson resigned to become a superintendent of a labour exchange in Birmingham. Hacking's contract was not renewed in 1910 and he went to the Central Labour College. Furniss was the sole survivor of the pre-strike, full-time teaching staff.

The search for a new Principal included an approach to Thomas Jones, later to be Secretary of the Cabinet, and subsequently founder of Coleg Harlech, Ruskin's sister college in Wales.[38] The choice fell on Gilbert Slater, appointed also to teach sociology. He had a good record both as an academic and as a public figure. He had published *The English peasantry and the enclosure of the common fields* in 1907 and as early as 1889 he had helped to organise unskilled workers in Plymouth in the wake of the 1889 Dock Strike. He had spent ten years in Woolwich engaged in social work and in local politics and had been Mayor of the borough.[39]

Slater and Furniss were on the staff throughout the five years, but there were many other changes of staff, in addition to J. A. Hobson

and R. H. Tawney (sociology and economics respectively), who stood in temporarily in 1909 and 1910. By the start of the war the permanent staff included, as Vice-Principal, Philip J. Baker (better known in later life as Philip Noel-Baker), and Percy Meadley, a former student. Another former student was Sam Smith, the first holder of the scholarship awarded by the Working Men's Club & Institute Union. He was appointed Organising Secretary and later General Secretary. He was to remain with the college for some forty years, occupying many roles, including teaching and liaison with the trade unions. A tiny man, known and helpful to generations of Ruskin students, he was also a public figure in Oxford, active in the Labour Party and as a J.P.

The new Principal quickly took in one lesson of the strike and proposed a major structural change. He recommended that in future the college's Governing Council should consist solely of representatives of working-class organisations. A public meeting was held at the annual TUC at Ipswich in September 1909 to explain the reasons for the dispute and also the new, proposed constitution. The following month a conference was held at the college on 'The democratic control of Ruskin College'. As a result the new Governing Council came to consist of representatives of the TUC, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Co-operative Union and the Working Men's Club & Institute Union. Any working-class body which maintained a student at the college was also entitled to a representative on the Council. One further innovation was the appointment of three academics to advise the college, as members of the Governing Council but without voting rights. Over the years this consultative role was to be performed by, among others, R. H. Tawney, G. D. H. Cole, A. D. Lindsay, Hugh Clegg, Asa Briggs, and Christopher Hill.

This organisational change clearly met the dissident student demand for independent working-class education: university dons and benefactors were no longer in a decision-taking role. The Central Labour College's Provisional Committee was quick to see the point and early in 1910 one of its members, Noah Ablett, ex-Ruskin student and South Wales miners' official, proposed that the two colleges amalgamate. Discussions were held, but proved abortive. Among other differences between them, Ruskin would not accept Hird, and the Central Labour College objected to the Club & Institute Union because some of its affiliates were Conservative clubs.[40]

The second change dealt with the college curriculum, in two separate ways. From 1910 Ruskin students began to sit the Oxford

University Diploma in Economics and Political Science and the college year was changed from January-December to the normal university pattern of September to July. Judged by the results the academic work of the college was satisfactory. At the five Diploma examinations from 1910 to 1914 of 55 students who were entered, 50 were successful of whom 26 obtained Distinctions. 'These successes,' stated the 1913 report by H.M. Inspectors (the first of several official inspections of the college in its history), 'not only reflect great credit upon the teaching, but also upon the perseverance, industry and ability of the students.'[41]

In addition to this examination connection with the university can be added other relationships: the university lectures attended by Ruskin students, the individual tuition given by university dons, and student use of the Bodleian Library, university undergraduates attending Ruskin lectures, and Ruskin students speaking in debates at the Oxford Union and at individual college societies. Yet it would be quite wrong to conclude that Ruskin was now well within the university's domain. Only about one in three of the students sat the Diploma examination, and the college lecture and class programme was consciously revised in 1911 so as to be more suitable to the needs of working men students. Many subjects were taught which had nothing to do with the Diploma: sociology, co-operation, trade unionism, trade union law, book-keeping, English literature, statistics, and the history and theory of socialism. This last was given in the years 1911–13 by Harry Quelch, the editor of *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation. On his death the lectures were given by W. Stephen Sanders, General Secretary of the Fabian Society.

The *Annual Report* for 1911, on reporting that twelve senior students had successfully taken the Diploma, eight of them with Distinction, made the point that 'each of the students who sat for the Diploma did so of his own expressed desire'.

> Several senior students did not take the examination; and while we are of opinion that a concluding examination of this kind is of extreme value to the student himself in showing him where he stands in his studies, yet we wish to say that the College does not exist to enable men to get such Diplomas. The value of the work of the college can not be tested by examinations, but only by the later careers—the characters, the work, the mental attitude—of its students.

(The Inspectors' report, two years later, similarly stated that 'it would be a mistake . . . to over-emphasize the place of examinations in the college course'.)

Among the majority who did not take the University Diploma were some who sat for the Co-operative Union examinations which were open to anyone in the country. A few students took the opportunity to do research and to publish the results of their work, usually after they had left the college. A. W. Ashby, the son of a smallholder, studied rural history, his *One hundred years of Poor Law administration in a Warwickshire village* being published in 1912 in the series 'Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History'. A. W. Humphrey wrote *The history of labour representation* (1912) and a *Life of Robert Applegarth* (1913). Houghton Diggle did research on conciliation and arbitration and Fred Longden wrote *Apprenticeship in ironmoulding*. Gilbert Slater, the Principal, said that the college was prouder of such work than of the Diploma successes. He made the point at a meeting on 22 February, 1913—the 14th anniversary of the inauguration of the college at the Oxford Town Hall—which was held to celebrate the opening of the new building, some twelve months after the foundation stones had been laid.

This first stage of the replacement of the old premises was a highlight of the immediate pre-war years. The published *Report of the proceedings* noted that:

> The new buildings present a handsome frontage to Walton Street. They are Georgian in design, and are a worthy addition to the many beautiful buildings of Oxford. Accommodation is provided for about fifty students, together with lodgings for the Principal. The majority of the rooms on the first, second, and third floors are occupied as student bed-sitting rooms, and on the ground floor is the Buxton Memorial Hall, which will seat two hundred and fifty persons.

The last was named in memory of the recently-deceased Charles Sydney Buxton, the young former Vice-Principal whose legacy had helped to finance the building, along with a contribution from Mrs. Grafflin (Walter Vrooman's widow, who had reverted to her maiden name on her divorce in 1903). Other contributions had come from a variety of sources including the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Weavers' Amalgamation and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

Gilbert Slater referred also to the educational classes being taken by students in various parts of the country and spoke of other developments such as the formation of a Ruskin College Fellowship of Ex-students. He looked forward to possible future changes. He hoped it would be possible to join with the organised workers of

Oxford to study 'the problems of industrial, social, and civic life'; he expected to get in touch with labour movements in European countries; and the Executive Committee was discussing with women's organisations the possibility of providing residential facilities for women. Arrangements were in fact made with the German Free Trade Unions for an exchange of students: while another innovation was a bi-monthly college magazine, *The Ruskin Collegian*, which began in January 1911.

The opening ceremony in February 1913 was a celebratory occasion with many speeches from representatives of working-class bodies, the university, and members of staff. One slight abrasive note was in a speech by Bourchier F. Hawksley, a member of the committee for the celebration of a hundred years of peace between Great Britain and the United States. He raised a question, which had been heard from the beginning of the college, and continues to be posed. He quoted a statement made by Sydney Buxton, the father of the former Vice-Principal, made at the foundation-stone ceremony a year before. Buxton had said: 'The motto of Ruskin College is that a man should raise his class and not rise out of it. Your students go back as far as possible to their trades, to their class, and to their locality, and the students of Ruskin College become, to use a phrase of my son's of which he was fond, educational missionaries in the best sense of the term.'

Hawksley accepted the word 'missionaries', but wondered if it were the case that students, having been educated, would go back to their trades? 'If you educate a man is he not entitled to take that position which his additional education has given him?'

Slater answered him: 'We hope that our students will go back and that they will always remain heart and soul with their fellow workers; that they will use their increased training and the increased knowledge they have in the service of their fellow workers.' The Inspectors' Report of April 1913 provided details of 30 of the 48 students who had left the College since September 1909. About a dozen had gone back to their own jobs and the others included two labour exchange managers and two labour exchange clerks, three on the staff of Ruskin College and another four lecturers or teachers elsewhere. Almost all of them, whether in their old or in new jobs, were part-time lecturers for the WEA or other bodies. Even the former Northumberland miner and member of his lodge committee, who was now a bookseller, was described as giving 'lectures to trade union branches, etc., in support of the college'. In general they undoubtedly were acting in 'the service of their fellow workers'.

PART TWO: THE INTER-WAR YEARS

Five years after the strike the college's activities came to an almost complete halt. A month after war was declared the Executive decided against residential education for the academic year 1914–15, and the staff were given notice, the Vice-Principal, Philip Baker, waiving his three-months salary. This temporary interruption proved to last the duration of the war, and the college did not re-open until 1919.

Gilbert Slater had at first remained in post as Principal, without salary, but soon left to become Professor of Indian Economics at Madras University. Furniss was appointed Principal, unpaid, in 1916, a post he was to occupy until 1925. The college buildings were used initially to house Belgian refugees, later as a nurses' hostel.

The Correspondence Department continued, although with fewer students. On Miss Giles's death in 1915, Mrs. Grafflin took over the administrative work for a short period. A summer school was held at the request of the Workers' Union in 1918, housed at St Edmund Hall, women participants being accommodated elsewhere, and a number of representative national conferences were arranged by the college in different cities, reflecting the current interest in post-war reconstruction. Their proceedings were published as pamphlets under the general heading 'The Reorganisation of Industry Series'. Both the summer schools and the conferences were to continue for a short time after the war.

Moreover preparations were being made for the resumption of the college's regular work once the war was over. In 1918 the Executive authorized the publication of what they called 'The New Propaganda Pamphlet'[42] written by Furniss. *Ruskin College: what it is and what it stands for* provided a useful resumé of the college's history and purposes, stating it was the 'College of the Labour Movement', thus opposing the Central Labour College's similar claim. It held out, it said, a helping hand to all labour organisations and others who were 'working to sweep away economic oppression, political injustice, and every kind of social wrong', and who were 'striving to build a new and better society'.

Such sentiments were both reminiscent of the views of the founders and also appropriate to a period when post-war reconstruction was in the air. The labour movement had made immense strides during the war: trade union membership reached new peaks each year, trade unions were cherished rather than opposed by the authorities, and the Labour Party in 1918 adopted a

conscious socialist policy. There were going to be expansions and improvements in education, including adult education. The Board of Education recognised the college and began to provide grants. The recent phenomenon of the Russian Revolution also exerted an influence. Its immediate impact for many was the realisation that great changes were possible and it affected equally those who can legitimately be described as 'moderate'. George Hodgkinson, a Coventry engineer, who came to Ruskin when it re-opened in October 1919, described in a letter to his wife the impression made by Lincoln Steffens, who had visited Russia in 1917 and 1919. He gave a talk at Ruskin and 'told us of his experiences in Russia, and he gave us a wonderfully graphic account of the Revolutions . . . His story of Russia is most marvellous and he had us spellbound for nearly an hour . . . I have 4 pages of notes which will be useful in spreading the Good News.'[43]

Hodgkinson was one of about 50 students who came in that first year. Some of them were enabled to come by the creation of new scholarships, four by trade unions (one of these being the National Federation of Women Workers), and another four by the Bournville Works Council, usually known as Chocolate Scholarships. Ex-servicemen were also able to get grants for educational study. Hodgkinson, like half of that first year's intake, did not return for a second year and indeed 10 of the 50 in 1919–20 had come for only a matter of weeks in order to take part in a new endeavour. This was the creation of short courses, for those students who could attend for a few weeks only; but they were to be catered for more systematically than in the past, the subjects having 'a practical bearing on their work'. During the year there were three separate courses of three months duration, each divided into three monthly sections, complete in themselves. The courses were: Some Problems of Labour In Industry, Problems in Local Government, and Trade Union Problems. Sam Smith was in charge of these arrangements.

The second change in the composition of the student body—as the scholarship provided by the NFWW suggests—was the admission at last of women students, eight of them in the first year. It would have been unthinkable to have accommodated them in the predominantly male college building and so a hostel was obtained, at 12 Linton Road, under the supervision of a woman warden. It was called officially 'Queen's Gardens' after a chapter in John Ruskin's *Sesame and lilies*. The house had been obtained, and the warden appointed, by the Principal's wife, who then asked the college Executive to approve her actions.[44] The first warden left after a few months, her

replacement being Miss Hurlston, officially designated matron, unofficially 'Chuck a Brick'.[45]

The name was bestowed characteristically by Stephen Schofield, one of the new staff appointed after the war. Of the senior staff Furniss the Principal and Sam Smith, formerly General Secretary, were the only tutors left from pre-war. Philip Baker did not return to the college after service in the Friends Ambulance Service, and Percy Meadley had been lost at sea. Ferdie Smith became General Secretary, a post he retained until his retirement in 1956. He had joined the college in 1904 as an office boy and was Chief Clerk in 1914, taking Sam Smith's place as General Secretary in 1919. In a 'Valedictory', which he wrote in 1956, his last year of service, he describes his first day at Ruskin when he was introduced to Miss Giles of the Correspondence Department. She told him to remember that 'whatever I did, it must always be "College first". That was a very wise piece of advice which I have always valued and tried to follow.'[46] So he did, as Henry Smith, then Vice-Principal, explained in a celebration of Ferdie Smith's 50 years at Ruskin. 'As the focal point of college life . . . Ferdie has been steadily at work, checking the college accounts, husbanding college finances, growing in the confidence of the Governing Body, switching off the lights.'[47] Jack Eames, a student during Ferdie's last two years, 1954–6, referred to his habit of pursuing house chairmen to complain of lights left on. 'He also had a penchant for trying to replace 100 watt light bulbs with 60 watt or even lower powered ones. It was a constant battle to keep warm and have adequate light for reading.'[48]

Only one of the new, 1919 staff remained for any length of time. Stephen Schofield was on the staff until his retirement in 1953. He taught social and economic history, but he was also a playwright, some of whose works were published. Some were performed by Ruskin students as part of the frequent social events at the college. He was active, along with others at the college, during the General Strike, but he was especially known to many students for his method of teaching. Jack Ashley, who was at the college in 1946–8, wrote of Schofield that 'he spoke slowly and reflectively but his urbane manner was part of a ploy to shock students by debunking historical myths. "The Peterloo Massacre?" he would ask innocently, extending his arms widely. "But only a few old men and a dog were killed that day, so I don't know why they call it a massacre".'[49] It was the method of challenge. Obviously he pursued his own independent line, as we shall see in the account of the food problem in the 1930s. Stanley Wilson, a student of 1924–6, recalled him as somewhat left-

wing and 'anti-examination'. His summary—'I liked him immensely'—is a sentiment shared by many former students.[50]

Schofield was unusual among that group of 1919 appointees in staying for so long. In the first few years there was a considerable turnover of staff, among them Percy Ford, who married one of the women students and was later Professor of Economics at Southampton University. Grace Colman was economics tutor from 1920–25. There had been women tutors since 1899, but they were part-timers and taught none of the main subjects. Grace Colman was the first full-time woman tutor and she taught a major subject. Several women had applied for the post and the Executive spent some time at one of its meetings considering 'the advisability of appointing a lady as a tutor. The Principal's opinion was that a lady tutor might be an advantage, especially in connection with the Hostel.'[51] But she was in any case to prove an excellent choice. Stanley Wilson recalled that she was a member of the mustard family and 'was really hot stuff intellectually and made everybody work or miserable. I thought she was worth a far better job than Ruskin could ever give her, she was the more than equal of any of the male staff.'[52]

Two others of the later post-war appointments proved to be long stayers. Suzanne Brunet was appointed part-time tutor in French in 1921, became full-time after World War II and retired in 1963. She married a Ruskin student, Lawrence Earnshaw, and their home was an open house to students. She was a well-loved college personality, she and her husband often taking parties of students abroad. She would reinforce a point she was making in tutorials—at which she supplied tea and toast—with the occasional, vigorous prod at a student with her toasting fork. In 1921, the same year she arrived, Alfred Barratt Brown was appointed Vice-Principal. A Quaker and member of the Independent Labour Party he had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector during the war. He was appointed Principal in 1926. A quiet and unassuming man, he was 'inclined to be silent during the tutorial'. A German woman student, recalled George Woodcock (1929–31), came from a tutorial 'in a blazing temper. "If I say nothing, he say nothing," she said. "Next time if he say nothing, I say nothing," '[53] A student of the late 1930s reported that he was known as 'bland, brown and tawny', reflecting the authorship of a standard book of economic history documents.[54] Sam Smith referred to his kindness to students, helping them to overcome their difficulties, but he 'did not kick them hard enough, perhaps (because he was not made that way) when such treatment was their just desert'.[55]

Much of that was in the future and a superficial and perhaps dismissive summary of the college's inter-war years could be that they were no more than part of the long period, from just after the strike to the late 1960s, when Ruskin's educational work was largely determined by the requirements of the Oxford University Diploma. Thus the 'standard' period of residence was for two years at the end of which students would sit the Diploma examination. The college, it might be thought, was very much within the university's ambit.

There is something to be said in support of this statement but it needs modifying. The essential fact is that many students came for only one year often because scholarships were given for one year only. As a result the educational programme was divided into two separate parts, one for each year. Indeed, some students who attended for only one year could not, in later life, describe the second year curriculum, despite the fact that all students were accommodated in a small building and mixed freely with each other. The first year's course of study was not regarded as part of the preparation for the Diploma. On the contrary, F. R. Hitchens, a student in 1922, recalled that, 'We were there to learn as much as we could in the months available, so that we could at the end of the year in the words of tutor Sam Smith, "Return to your world and try hard to thrust some moral standards into Society".' But the absence of an academic qualification as the goal did not mean the students had an easy time. 'We were kept hard at studies by all our tutors,' continued Hitchens, 'and much midnight oil was burnt. Our lecture notes for the day had to be re-written and submitted for discussion. Sections from the recommended books *had to be read* or one was soon "caught out", and of course the weekly struggle which had to be submitted on Saturday mornings, was the umpteen page essay on a given subject. Every student was given a different subject, so that there was very little chance of last minute collaboration. At the end of the year there was a fairly tough revision, but there was no formal examination or marks given.'[56]

The first year students were exposed to a wide range of subjects which varied from time to time and included, during the twenty years, industrial law, psychology, foreign languages, book-keeping, public speaking and even practice in 'Wireless Circle Leadership' in connection with the BBC's Wireless Adult Education Talks. In the 1920s one regular visiting lecturer was E. C. Fairchild, at one time a leading member of the Social Democratic Federation and its successor, the British Socialist Party, whose course was on marxism. These and other classes were in addition to the regular courses on economics, politics and history. As many generations of adult

students experienced, the initial adjustment to full-time study could be 'devastating', as J. H. Smith recalled of his early weeks at Ruskin in 1927. He was referring particularly to the reception of his weekly essays by Stephen Schofield. He would leave his written work with Schofield at the end of the weekly tutorial in order, as he thought, 'that he might make some attempt at correcting some of the more serious mistakes'. For some weeks 'these essays came back to me badly mauled in red ink'. He explains that 'subject matter, grammar and style met with severe criticism. On occasions I left Mr. Schofield at the end of a tutorial almost reduced to tears. Once I was so badly upset that Mr. Schofield came in the afternoon and took me out into the country in his car, a chain driven Trojan.' He was given encouragement and good advice.[57]

About 60 per cent of the first year students returned for a second year and those who opted to take the Diploma examination—about two-thirds of them—found that the teaching programme met their requirements. There was no obligation to take the Diploma and the non-Diploma students followed special courses designed to meet their particular interests. The Diploma candidates studied the five obligatory subjects, economics, both theoretical and applied, politics, economic history and constitutional history—and a sixth subject chosen from a prescribed list. In the summer they would attend the Examination Schools, in dark suits and wearing white bow ties ('as far as we got to wearing academic dress', commented J. H. Smith), writing the six papers during three consecutive days. The results would be published and the successful majority would receive their Diploma in Economics and Political Science, popularly known as 'Dipeconpolski'. One slight variation from the late 1920s was that a few students, in addition to the Diploma examination, also undertook practical work so as to obtain their Social Training Certificate, and just before the Second World War, a handful sat the University Diploma in Public and Social Administration.

The absence of a rule or convention that students would normally take the University Diploma can be regarded as a continuation of the pre-1914 practice. What was new about the inter-war period, and gives it a unity, was the severe economic depression which began abruptly in 1921 after a short post-war boom. The most important consequence of the slump was clear: a shortage of students. The college's income also suffered, although the fall in prices helped to keep expenditure down.

In 1920–21, during the boom, as many as 72 students were in residence but the following year the number fell to 60 (19 of them

being women) and to 51 in 1922–23. For the rest of the period usually less than 40 students came to the college, counting both first and second year residents. In 1934–5 the very low number of 30 were at the college. There is no difficulty in understanding why this should be. The ex-servicemen's scheme did not last long and fewer union scholarships were available at a time when union membership fell and thus union income fell drastically. It was not, at first, caused by a lack of applicants. The *Annual Report* for 1924-5 noted that 'the demand for residential opportunities is widespread'. As many as 126 candidates had entered for three scholarships for which an examination had been held.

Numbers were at first maintained by the short course students; in one year, 1924–5, just over half—19 out of 37 students—came for the short courses. And in the late 1920s a high proportion, about one in five, came from overseas. George Woodcock recalled that 'we had Germans, Indians, Norwegians, one from Iceland; a Japanese, a Chinese, a Turk and several Egyptians'. These foreigners, he points out, were not necessarily working men or from working-class organisations. 'The Egyptians were sons of quite wealthy people and they came to Ruskin because it was for them the easiest way of taking up residence in Oxford.' Some of the spare rooms were indeed rented to outsiders, this reversal of the early policy that the college should not be a lodging-house nevertheless adding useful revenue. These people were not 'robbing any worthy Britisher of a place ... scholarships to fill the places were just not there'.[58]

As soon as the slump arrived in 1921 efforts had been made to get more students, especially women, whose numbers fell dramatically. Conferences were held in a number of cities to try to recruit women students and a scholarship fund was obtained from the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment. Further assistance came from the Sir Ernest Cassel Trust, which supplied funds for the Central Joint Advisory Committee on Tutorial Classes to provide scholarships to those who had completed the three-year university tutorial classes. These were for a term's study. Nine such scholars came in 1922–23, a further nine the following year and eleven in 1924–5. That was the high point of those courses and the numbers declined after that, partly because the Cassel Trustees altered their policy and began to provide four scholarships for the long courses instead of a larger number for shorter periods. This link with the university tutorial classes was a significant way of ensuring that Ruskin obtained good working-class students who had been exposed to some form of higher education.

The shortfall in numbers was in part made up later by the provision by some local authorities and by the TUC of student scholarships or grants. One student who obtained his grant through a local authority was F. B. Connolly, who attended in 1936–8. In Bradford in the early 1930s he was unemployed and the suggestion that he apply to Ruskin came from Ben Wilson, a pre-1914 student, then a WEA lecturer. Connolly got his grant on the third annual attempt, by which time he was working as a temporary postman. He had £135 a year to cover the fees, board and accommodation and pocket money. He obtained his Diploma in 1938, went briefly to France on a travelling scholarship, but on his return to England could not get a job. Eventually he obtained one with Oxford City Council with which he remained until his retirement.[59]

He at least was able to stay for two years. Another student in the early thirties was less fortunate. Harold J. Barnes had been a lithographic artist, but was unemployed and like Connolly was advised to apply to Ruskin by an ex-student. He sat the three-hour TUC examination (Barnes providing the writing paper) and was successful, coming to Ruskin in 1933. But the scholarship was for one year only and he could not get funds for another year's study. While at Ruskin he 'toted a litho stone around ... on which to practise, it was to no avail'. He was unemployed for a time after leaving the college, eventually getting a job with the Ordnance Survey.[60]

'In my day,' wrote George Woodcock, 'Ruskin was poorly supported and money was scarce.' The students' scholarships 'hardly pretended to cover the barest essentials'. Woodcock was a TUC scholar and he received an allowance of £25 a year for personal expenses. 'That worked out at £8. 6s. 8d. a term of eleven weeks with my fares and my keep during vacations to find from where I could. I used to ask Ferdie Smith to hold my money and he would dole it out to me in odd pounds now and then which I immediately spent in a riot of coffees and cakes, expensive cigarettes and beer, as a bracer against a week or a fortnight of the most stringent austerity. And the majority of students were worse off than I was.'[61] However, those who had scholarships from the Club & Institute Union received better allowances.

In 1974, on her retirement as Principal's secretary, after fifty years service with the college, Mrs. Violet Page (née Cooper) described how the staff in her early days would often have to wait for their pay until sufficient money had been received that month by the college.[62] In the inter-war period the college's turnover was in the region of £6–8,000 a year, and in the first post-war decade it was in deficit

almost every year, in each of three years to an amount of over £1,000. Some help came from the early 1920s with an annual per capita grant from the Board of Education, a few hundred pounds a year, from an annual £250 from the Sara Hall Trustees to pay for a Robert Owen Lectureship in economic and social history (a post occupied for most of the time by Schofield), and, more substantially, a large annual sum—usually of £1,000—from the Cassel Trust. With the reduction in the number of women students Queen's Gardens was sold in 1922. The proceeds were set aside to provide a scholarship for a woman student.

In the midst of these 1920s problems the college was caught up in a scheme which, if it had succeeded, would have changed the whole course of its history. After the war the trade union movement began to make greater efforts to provide educational services to its members. Much was put into operation although declining incomes made unions cautious and the negotiations were bedevilled by the continuing differences between those who supported the WEA approach and the protagonists of the Labour College system. Ruskin was involved in these developments, for example, in the provision of correspondence courses through individual trade unions (and also the Club & Institute Union), the fees sometimes paid by the relevant organisations.

One theme running through the discussions was the need for educational unity and despite the antagonism of the supporters of the two main bodies, the WEA and the Labour College movement, the idea was generally accepted. In 1925 a suggestion was put forward that the TUC should take over both Ruskin and the Central Labour College to form a single residential college on a new site, to be incorporated with the residential college that the Co-operative Union was proposing to set up at Kew. Both the colleges agreed to hand over their institutions to the TUC. But late in 1925 there was a new development when the socialist Countess of Warwick offered the TUC her large house, Easton Lodge in Essex, to be used for residential purposes. The General Council of the TUC proposed to the 1926 Congress that the offer be accepted. It would require an annual levy of one penny per member for each of the next three years. Congress debated the proposal but it was not accepted, for two main reasons, both financial. The general point was that the unions were short of money. The Congress took place only four months after the General Strike; funds were low, and the miners were still on strike. More important, the view prevailed that what money there was could be more effectively spent in other ways. More members, it was

argued, could be reached through evening classes than by residential education, this argument being put forward very strongly and effectively by the National Council of Labour Colleges, an offshoot of the Central Labour College. Ironically, these two organisations, despite their alignment on educational philosophy, were very much opposed to each other on this issue. The General Council's motion was referred back, in effect turned down. The Countess of Warwick withdrew her offer.[63]

However, it is doubtful if the two colleges could have joined together in some way, despite the financial imperative to do so. In discussions with the TUC each had insisted on retaining its own approach to education, and a number of people associated with Ruskin had opposed its leaving Oxford. One was Mrs. Grafflin who offered the college £1,000 if it remained where it was. This was gratefully accepted.[64]

One consequence of the failure of the Easton Lodge scheme was the closure in 1929 of the Central Labour College. Ruskin continued on its way with Barratt Brown promoted to Principal. His place as Vice-Principal was taken by Alfred Plummer who had been teaching economics at the college since 1925. In 1927 J. L. ('Bill') Etty was appointed to teach constitutional history and the last change of tutorial staff was in 1937 when Plummer left to be replaced by Henry Smith, making a triumvirate of Smiths. Plummer wrote, among other things, a life of Bronterre O'Brien, the Chartist leader. His economics teaching was based largely on such texts as Marshall's *Principles*, Edwin Cannan's *Wealth* and Wicksteed's *Commonsense of political economy*. Not all the students welcomed this concentration on conventional economic theory, as we shall see. Etty was a precise, meticulous man, with tough academic standards for whom no essay was satisfactory if it 'did not include the four or five points of his lecture on the subject'.[65] In the 1929 general election he stood, unsuccessfully, as the Labour candidate for Oxford.

Henry Smith, who was to remain at the College until his retirement in 1970, arrived at Ruskin one year after a second instalment of the new building was finished. Despite all the difficulties involved in the slump the college was generally in surplus in the 1930s and funds were raised for the new development. Money came from trade unions, co-operative societies, working men's clubs and a number of individuals. The largest single donation came from the Halley Stewart Trust on the recommendation of Malcolm Stewart as a result of his experience as a Commissioner for Depressed Areas. As well as new student study-bedrooms, a new students' common room and a

library were provided, the former named after Malcolm Stewart, the latter after A. G. Walkden, the long serving General Secretary of the Railway Clerks' Association. Almost all the old buildings occupied since 1903 had now gone, and there was to be no more rebuilding on that site for three decades.

The new buildings provided improved facilities. They did not affect the normal routine of the college. The three terms in the academic year were of eleven weeks each, the students generally remaining in residence throughout the term: few had sufficient money to go home during term-time even though there was no requirement to stay at the college at weekends. Formal academic work was confined to the mornings, apart from lectures by invited speakers and debates on some evenings. Lectures at Ruskin were somewhat less formal than in the university, being interrupted or followed by questions and discussions. Because of the small number of students tutorials were usually held singly and in addition to the weekly essays on the term's subject students would be required from time to time to write 'Board' essays (i.e. the title displayed on the notice board) on a general topic. Students also attended university lectures as recommended by their tutors, but these were normally confined to second year students. Some went to lectures on philosophy, anthropology and literature, but others concentrated on the subjects of their particular study. Ephraim Lipson, for example, lectured on economic history and W. G. S. Adams on politics. Some went to the lectures of Miss C. V. Butler of the social work course at Barnett House. But undoubtedly the one who made the greatest impact was G. D. H. Cole (who sometimes lectured at Ruskin, his talks there being open to university undergraduates). Cole, wrote Stanley Wilson, 'was our hero' and he spoke with immense enthusiasm about whatever his subject was. He was 'delighted to see Ruskin students and other ex-servicemen at his lectures, who treated him as an equal and were not afraid to ask difficult questions'.[66] J. H. Smith agreed that his seminars on industrial organisation were 'most helpful', but he found Cole's lectures on economic theory beyond him. The delivery was too fast, 'he was just a talking machine from which words shot out like bullets from a rifle'. Smith gave up attending very early. However, there is no doubt at all about Cole's helpfulness.[67] Stanley Wilson wrote that 'he would give up two hours if he had half a dozen students who wanted to argue'.[68] This helpfulness could go to great lengths. Cole suggested to E. H. Littlecott, a student at Ruskin in the late 1920s, that if he would like to visit him one evening Cole would look out a few books to recommend for his

reading on the rationalisation of industry.

> He had lectured at 9 a.m. that day, caught a train to London to attend a meeting of MacDonald's National Economic Council, come back to Oxford, changed into a dinner-jacket and attended some official do: I arrived by appointment at 8.30; he looked desperately tired, and I wanted to retreat and come again another day. But he would have none of it, and after 1½ hours, during which he had retrieved books from his shelves and maintained a steady flow of assessment, I came away with a list of 100 books. A girl in the Ruskin office . . . typed out enough copies of that list for all adult students in Oxford reading economics to have one.[69]

The relationship with the university was nevertheless ambivalent. George Hodgkinson wrote, in 1919, about 'Some of our Rebel Element [who] do not like coming to too close quarters with the wealthy classes',[70] whereas, in Harold Barnes's view, the opportunity to attend university lectures was an experience that was 'little short of miraculous'.[71] Students could join the Labour Club and other undergraduate organisations except for the Oxford Union, although some were invited to debates and others went there to play billiards (before the Club & Institute Union presented the college in 1939 with a billiard table). Undergraduates, usually of a politically-sympathetic stance, would come to Ruskin for meetings and for the regular Saturday evening dances. Yet there was the 'all-pervading impression that we were apart from the University proper, a fringe body of peculiar people'.[72] For their part, Ruskin students would regard the undergraduates as being young, immature and upper class. Even at the University Labour Club, wrote J. H. Smith, there was a major difference between Ruskin students and Oxford undergraduates. The former thought the discussions too theoretical and took every opportunity to direct attention to immediate issues. The undergraduates responded by advising Ruskin students 'to get off the slag heaps of the coalfields' and take a wider view of the problems they were examining.[73]

At the same time the university came generally to accept Ruskin's existence and there were some close links between the two. The main instrument was the university's Extra-Mural Delegacy, established in 1923, and its Adult Education Centre set up in 1927 in Rewley House quite close to Ruskin. The Delegacy provided places for ex-Ruskin students to train to become tutors in adult education. Some students also went to other places to train as adult tutors. In this way

the hope expressed in the 1908 Oxford Report, that adult students who had been to Oxford could become adult tutors, was realised. The Delegacy also arranged for the admission of adult students from Ruskin (and from the university tutorial classes) to read for university degrees, with exemption from Admission and First Public Examinations. From the late 1920s a few students proceeded to Oxford colleges to read for degrees, some taking Modern Greats (PPE). The best known was George Woodcock, later to be General Secretary of the TUC. Other students went to other universities, but the total was very small.

F. R. Hitchens, who thought that relationships with the university were 'excellent . . . they could not have been more helpful', notes, somewhat deferentially, that 'we were allowed to sit or lay about on St. John's lawn in the afternoons without restriction', but he excludes from this encomium the neighbouring Worcester College.[74] No doubt the very proximity of the two colleges was a cause of friction. A 'boundary dispute . . . escalated into a rather bitter little feud' and A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol, asked the Balliol law tutor to advise Ruskin ' "because Worcester has the money and influence to look after itself and Ruskin hasn't".'[75] In the late 1930s the Provost of Worcester complained that one of the Ruskin students, a miner, was sunbathing on the roof of a porch in full view of his wife.[76] Hitchens thought that the friction between the colleges was exacerbated by an incident in 1923 when Worcester College grounds were invaded at the time of a lecture given by Marie Stopes about which Ruskin conflicted with the university administration.

The college, despite its undoubted dependence in many senses on the university, was not afraid to take actions which might offend the larger body or some of the people in it. There was perhaps nothing especially surprising in Furniss, the college Principal, having joined the Labour Party during the war, standing as its candidate for a university seat in the 1918 general election. He came bottom of the poll. Nor in the fact that Ruskin students greatly assisted the local busmen in a strike in 1920, the Ruskin people having more experience of industrial action than the Oxford men. After a crowd of undergraduates and some Ruskin students had immobilised some buses a Ruskin student was arrested, one of a long tradition of Ruskin students ending up in court for alleged actions during industrial disputes. In this instance the case was dismissed, and the expected attack on Ruskin College by the University Officers' Training Corps did not materialise.[77] (There had been physical attacks by undergraduates on the college before the war and also later on.) More

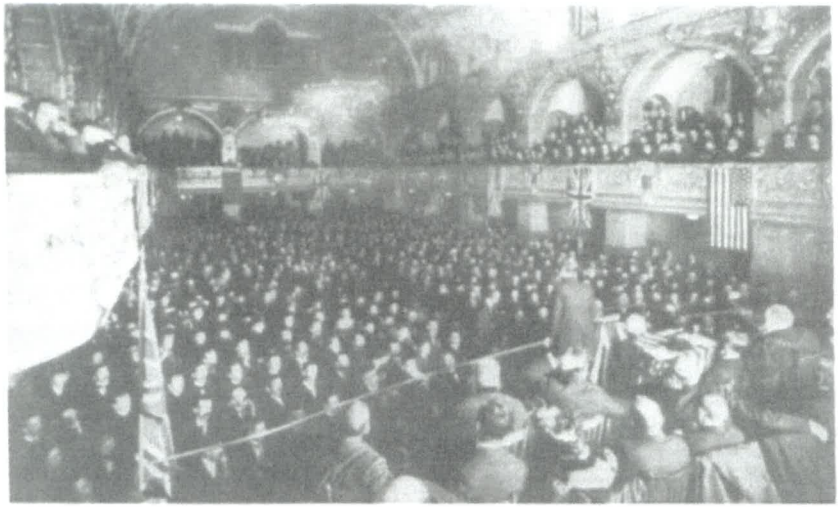

Fig. 1. Inaugural meeting, Oxford Town Hall, 22 February 1899.

Fig. 2. The founders with some members of staff, in the garden of 14 St. Giles.
Left to right: Bertram Wilson, Walter Vrooman, A. J. Hacking,
H. F. Hall, Charles Beard.

Fig. 3. Correspondence Class, Oldham, March 1900.
Leader: Mr. S. O. Andrew M.A.

Fig. 4. Ruskin Hall Educational League: West Riding Conference,
Shipley Glen, 2 June 1903.

Fig. 5. One of the student dinner cooks, c. 1900.

Fig. 6. Walton Street site, 1903.

Fig. 7. College group, 1904.
Staff seated, left to right: A. J. Hacking, Miss Giles, Dennis Hird, Miss Williamson, H. B. Lees Smith, Bertram Wilson.

Fig. 8. College Office, Walton Street, pre-World War I

Fig. 9. Ruskin College (v. Mansfield College), 20 February 1906, White House Ground, Oxford.

Fig. 10. Striking students moving out, Worcester Place, 1909.

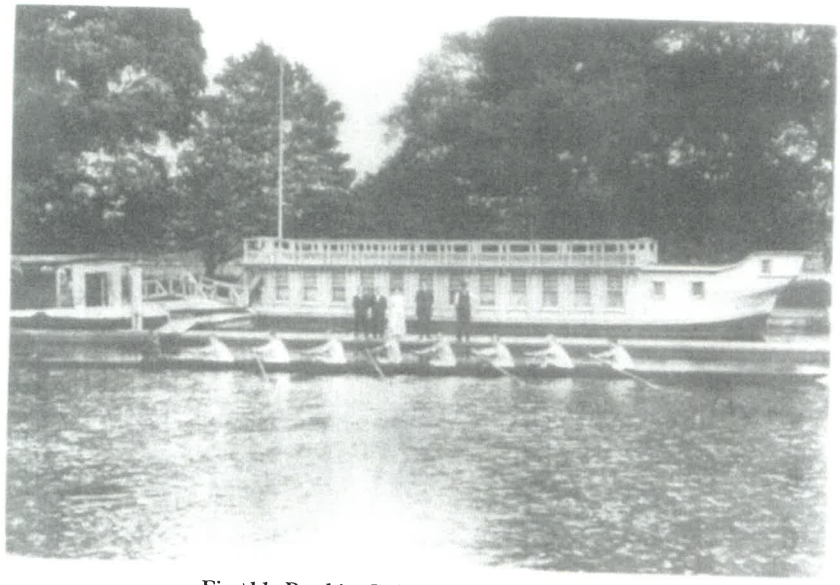

Fig. 11. Ruskin College eight, 1911–12.

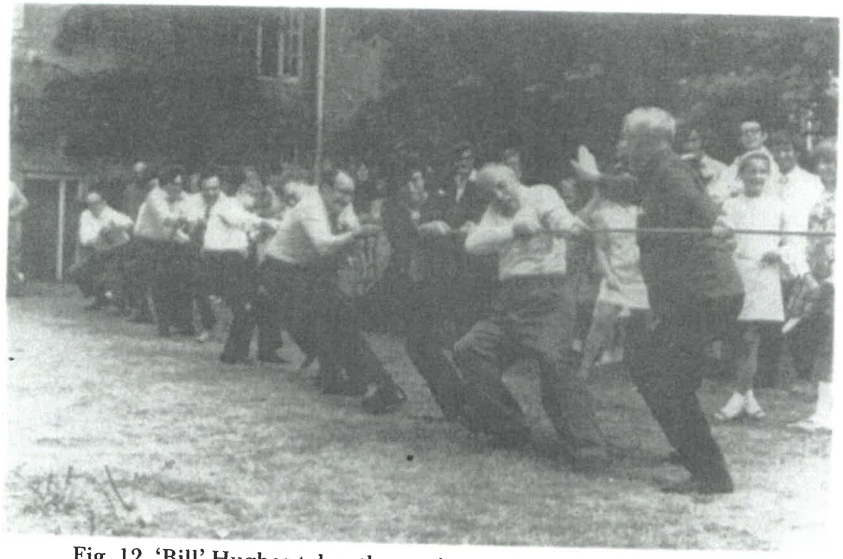

Fig. 12. 'Bill' Hughes takes the strain. Staff and students at Rookery garden party, 1970.

Fig. 13. Henry Smith, Vice-Principal, lecturing on economics, 1970.

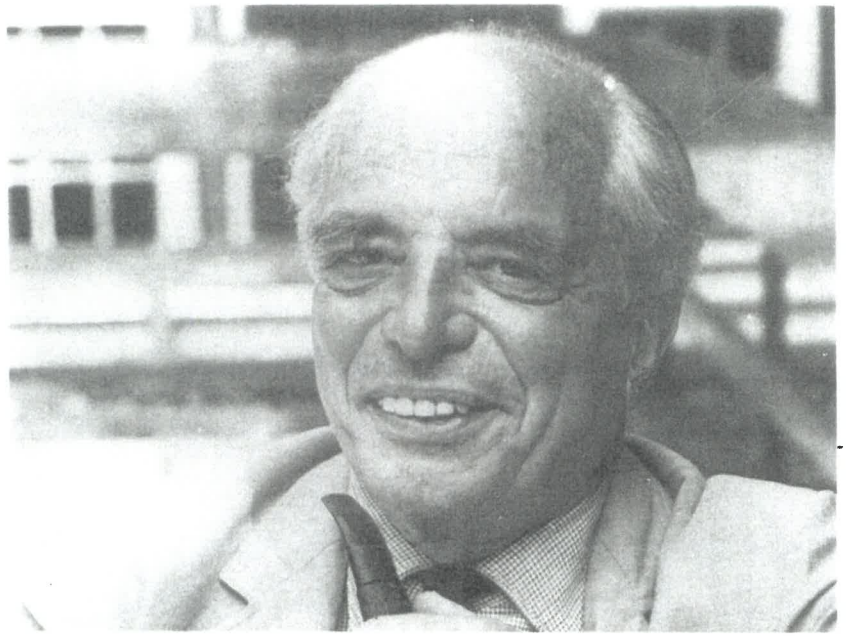

Fig. 14. H. D. Hughes, Principal 1950–79.

Fig. 15. Jim Callaghan, Prime Minister, laying foundation stone of Cyril Plant Building (Biko), 18 October 1976.

Fig. 16. New College Library at Walton Street. Opened 14 May 1982.

important, in view of the often repeated statement that Ruskin had to tread carefully to avoid antagonising the university, was the refusal by the college Executive of the offer by the Vice-Chancellor in 1921 that Ruskin students be matriculated in the university and thus have a closer association with the university. And—to revert to Hitchens's point—there was the 'Birth Control' lecture. In 1923 Marie Stopes, the pioneer exponent of birth control, was denied by the Vice-Chancellor the use of public and university halls to address a meeting. 'The meeting was rapidly transferred to Ruskin College—outside the university's jurisdiction—and Marie eventually appeared, to enormous applause, and the presentation of a bunch of yellow mimosa from Evelyn Waugh, then an undergraduate and not yet a Catholic.'[78] To avoid the proctors some of the audience climbed over the wall from Worcester College. The Principal of Ruskin stubbornly defended the decision to hold the meeting on the grounds of free speech. This was not at all appreciated by the Vice-Chancellor who asked that in future his permission be obtained before public meetings were held in the college. A lengthy correspondence ensued. The college Executive refused to give such a pledge, and the Vice-Chancellor had to be satisfied with asserting his right and that of the proctors to put such meetings out of bounds to undergraduates.[79]

Three years later, during the General Strike, both students and staff worked via the local Trades Council—temporarily renamed Council of Action—in support of the TUC's policy to give all help to the miners. The stoppage began on 4 May but two days before that Ferdie Smith offered the use of rooms at Ruskin. Barratt Brown, then Acting Principal, was co-opted from the Oxford Labour Party, and Fred Kettle was the Ruskin student representative. The large number of meetings which were held were under the supervision of John Price, Ruskin's Organising Secretary, and Sam Smith. The college also set up a research committee, in which Alfred Plummer was active, providing material for speakers. The students were particularly engaged in assisting the numerous meetings held in many towns and villages in a wide area around Oxford as well as in Oxford itself. Stephen Schofield was an effective chairman at many such meetings.[80]

Stanley Wilson recalled that, in addition to the General Strike, Ruskin students were active in support of local Labour candidates in the 1924 general election, both of these events occurring while he was a student. 'I cannot remember anyone missing a single lecture.'[81] But the college authorities were not always too pleased with students' extra-mural activities; they should concentrate on studying. Yet it

was not easy for students with often strong convictions to ignore current events. The First World War, the economic depression, and the rise of Nazism dramatically affected those who lived through them. In the 1930s there were local issues to occupy them, in part a consequence of the transformation of Oxford into an industrial city through the growth of the car industry. Ruskin students took part or assisted in the Pressed Steel strike of 1934 for union recognition, in the opposition to the Cutteslowe Walls which had been built in North Oxford to separate middle-class from working-class houses, and in the campaign against poor housing conditions at Florence Park near the Cowley car factories.[82] They actively supported Labour candidates at local and general elections. One well-known student, Donovan Brown, published, initially from Ruskin, a journal, *This Unrest*, devoted to examining current issues from a radical standpoint. Among its contributors were G. D. H. Cole, Charles Madge, C. Day Lewis and Naomi Mitchison.

Donovan Brown later became editor of *Russia Today*, and his marxist convictions were sufficiently strong while he was at Ruskin to refuse to take the University Diploma (not that he was obliged to). Moreover, a common response of some students was objection to what they described as 'bourgeois economics' being taught. It is strange that after Fairchild's lectures on marxism ended in the late 1920s the subject was not taught at Ruskin. One student of 1934–6 recalled that the small Ruskin staff were anti-marxist and 'we as Ruskin students were offended that our Staff at Ruskin could think it not worth while even to include Marx in their reviews of economics or philosophy, even to criticise or condemn him . . . it wasn't that most students knew much about, or agreed with Marx, but—apparently unlike the Staff—they had heard of him'.[83]

Even in the very radical 1930s, despite such opinions, Ruskin students made no attempt to alter the situation. This was partly because there was plenty of opportunity to learn abour marxism from visiting speakers or at university lectures (an ironic comment on the fears of the 1909 strikers about the reactionary university).[84] Perhaps too the number of students who wanted to study marxism was small: only one student in the inter-war period opted to take marxism as his sixth, optional, examination paper. No doubt some were prepared to submerge their feelings in order to obtain a Diploma.

In general—and this gives the period another unity—there was hardly any conflict at Ruskin between students and staff. It was a very quiet era. Some former students speak of its being a 'privilege' that they were able to attend the college. (The term was quite justified,

however, when used to mean that they had been chosen by their union.) There was only one, overt dispute, and that was about food.

In the mid-1930s breakfasts consisted of tomatoes on toast along with cornflakes and milk. The matron, Miss Clara Adams, was insistent on the supremacy of her dietetic knowledge. In 1935 the students asked for 'an alternative boiled egg'. The Principal refused and a meals strike was called which lasted for three days. 'Stephen Schofield showed his disagreement with the paternalistic attitude of the Principal by inviting the whole student body (all 36 of us) up to his garden for a massive salad meal on the lawn, with ham, pork pies, etc. etc. and, especially, hard boiled eggs.' The Principal conceded and boiled eggs were available for breakfast thereafter.[85]

PART THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE SINCE 1945

On the outbreak of war in 1939 the college continued its teaching programme. It issued a prospectus for the 1940–1 session but the rapid change in the circumstances of war in 1940 ended that hope and there were no more residential students until 1945. The college building was used as a maternity hospital, but this time, unlike in the First World War, the Correspondence Department's work expanded greatly. The courses were freely available, from 1941 under the War Office Scheme, to members of the armed forces and the demand for them was great. As many as 7,266 people registered for courses in the peak year of 1944–5. With low expenditure and with income from rent and the correspondence courses the college for once was in a healthy financial state. The debt on construction work, part dating from 1913, was now cleared.

One month after the end of the war in Europe the Ministry of Health released the building and arrangements were quickly made for re-opening. In September 1945 30 students arrived and another 20 the following January. The staff resumed their duties with one difference. Barratt Brown, the Principal, had resigned during the war and his place was taken by Lionel Elvin, who was to remain Principal for five years. A Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, he was appropriately the son of a trade union leader (H. H. Elvin, General Secretary of the National Union of Clerks) and brother of another (G. Elvin, General Secretary of the Association of Cine-Technicians).

Just as after 1914–18 the demand for places was high, for ex-servicemen's grants were available and in the second year, 1946–7, as many as 100 students were in residence. The existing building could not house them, and there were severe restrictions on new construction. Instead, premises were obtained at Headington, some three miles from the Walton Street site. Their acquisition was one of the last major tasks for the college undertaken by Sam Smith. The Rookery, a large house with spacious grounds, which had once been occupied by Sir Michael Sadler, who had been secretary of Oxford University's extension work from 1885 to 1895, was at first used by Ruskin as a hostel. The students who lived there cycled each day to Walton Street for their tutorials and lectures. Later first-year teaching was all done at the Rookery. In 1950 the old garage and stables were refurbished as a women's hostel. All women students, of both years, were housed in what was inevitably called 'The Nunnery'. Shortly afterwards the second-year women objected to being separated, inconveniently, from the Walton Street site, where their lectures and tutorials took place, and successfully appealed to the Executive to be allowed to reside there.[86] On both sites distinct parts of the premises were reserved for accommodation of the two sexes, but the move can be regarded as a further step in the full integration of men and women students.

The acquisition of the Rookery was the main physical development during Lionel Elvin's five-year stay as Principal; he left in 1950 for a post with UNESCO. Elvin's speciality was English literature and he placed greater emphasis on it, establishing a course which included also politics and philosophy: it led to no formal qualifications. He also taught politics, one of his students, Jack Ashley (later a Member of Parliament), describing him as an 'excellent teacher, genuinely interested in discussing ideas and persuading students to express their own . . . he never patronised or pretended ignorance; he treated students as his equals in intelligence, if not in knowledge.'[87] He also had a particular interest in America and arranged for students from the USA to attend Ruskin. Some were trade unionists, enabled to come with scholarships provided by the Transatlantic Foundation. This was an idea of Sir Robert Mayer; he supplied the money in the hope that the scheme would be taken over by the American Federation of Labor. In the event this did not happen.

Despite the severe post-war economic difficulties it was a period, just as after 1918, of high expectations. A Labour Government had been elected, this time with a large majority, and had begun to put into practice a number of long-term labour movement objectives.

The 1945 Parliament included thirteen ex-Ruskin students, one of them — Jack Lawson — being a Cabinet Minister. In addition the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, had lectured briefly at the college before World War I; another Minister was Philip Noel-Baker, a former Vice-Principal; and two other MPs had been associated with the college: A. Creech Jones had been on the Governing Council, and Grace Colman had been a tutor.

Some of the great hopes of 1945 were soon dashed with the onset of economic difficulties in the country's efforts to recover from the war, but this time there was no immediate post-war slump. Full employment was maintained for a quarter of a century and at long last the college was able to expand and flourish.

For most of that time the Principal was H. D. ('Bill') Hughes. A graduate of Balliol and former Organising Secretary of the Fabian Society he had been a Labour M.P. from 1945 to 1950, being Parliamentary Private Secretary to Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education. He lost his seat to Enoch Powell at the 1950 general election and later that year succeeded Lionel Elvin as Principal, remaining in the post until he retired in 1979. With the support of his wife Beryl (often to be seen in the honorary capacity of supernumerary college gardener) he was an ebullient and hard-working Principal, devoted to the college and an adept politician and public speaker. He not only advanced the cause of adult education, but also enlivened many a college social with a self-composed satirical song while precariously poised on chair or table.

He presided over many major developments in the college, for they were years of great change. There were more students and more staff. More buildings were built or acquired and old ones replaced or refurbished. The budget expanded vastly, an increasing proportion coming from public sources. Equally significant were changes of other kinds, many reflecting developments in British society generally. Rising standards of living meant that students were much less tolerant of sub-standard accommodation; despite the difficulties of living on student grants they could afford to go home during term-time more frequently. They began to bring their cars to college.

The greatest change of all was in attitudes. A useful summary statement was contained in the 1977 Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy (the Bullock Report): 'it is only since World War II that we have seen the end of the deferential society'. The Committee was referring to the role of workers in decision-making in industry, but the notion is applicable to educational institutions. One consequence was the extension of

democracy in college government in which both staff and students began to have a greater say in the formal structure.

These various changes will be explored in detail. They took place or were initiated at different times, but it is reasonable to regard the 1960s as a major division. There were significant continuities, but after that decade the college was a different place, in many respects, from what it had been before. First, a resumé of the major developments will provide a background picture.

In spite of the college's improved finances during the war the following two decades were not a period of monetary ease. In 1963 the Report of the Robbins Committee on Higher Education, in commending the work of the long-term residential colleges, noted that 'for years these colleges for adult students have been carrying on in the face of increasing financial difficulties'. Once the grants for ex-servicemen had come to an end the college had to try to get support for students from whatever source it could, not without much effort, some of it fruitless. However, improvements came in the 1950s in two ways. With the backing of the General Council of the TUC successful approaches were made to trade unions to provide scholarships for their members. Thenceforth a regular feature of the college's annual published financial accounts showed a long list of unions contributing to the 'Trade Union Appeal Fund'. More important, in terms of the number of students involved, were grants from local education authorities. The Association of Education Committees urged LEAs to make grants for students more readily available. Many did so but not all authorities complied and some paying authorities did not provide the full recommended grant—unlike the mandatory grants to university students those to the adult residential colleges were discretionary. A regular, time-consuming task undertaken by the Principal was negotiation with LEAs for the full grant. Moreover, LEA grants were normally awarded in the first instance for one year and only renewed if the awarding body was satisfied that the student had been conscientious and was worthy of continuing to finish the course. Overseas students were enabled to come to Ruskin with funds supplied by a variety of organisations. Americans often came for a year on Fulbright scholarships and the slowly increasing numbers from developing countries might be financed by the TUC, the Workers' Travel Association, the British Council or by their own governments.

Student fees provided one of the two major elements in the college's income. Apart from grants from a variety of sources in the

labour movement—the TUC, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Co-operative Wholesale Society—as well as many working men's clubs, trades councils and co-operative societies and from private trusts (of decreasing importance)—the second major amount came, increasingly, from the Department of Education. By the early 1960s student fees and the Department's grant each amounted to 40 per cent of total income.

The major impact of the Robbins Report was on the college's premises. Sir Edward Boyle, the Education Minister in the Conservative government, reputedly claimed that his greatest ministerial achievement was his benign policy towards the long-term residential colleges. For the first time government funds were provided for capital expenditure. In January 1964, soon after the Robbins Report appeared, the Department offered a 50 per cent building grant in aid, to enable Ruskin to cater for a student population of 160 (at that time the number of students had reached almost 140). 'As a result of these developments,' commented the college's *Annual Report* for 1963–4, 'the overcrowded and unsatisfactory physical conditions under which the college has had to work for many years will soon be alleviated.'

There had earlier been a slight improvement in student accommodation at the Rookery site in Headington, for first-year students. Money had been raised as a result of the college's 1949 Jubilee appeal and a pre-fabricated timbered structure built in the Rookery grounds in 1959. It was named Bowerman House after C. W. Bowerman of the London Society of Compositors, who had been associated with the college from 1898, when he was a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC. He was chairman of the governors for most of the time from the new constitution of 1910 to his death in 1947. The extra rooms thus provided certainly remedied some of the overcrowding at Headington. Up to then, in the 1950s, most students had to share rooms; six women students, in the year 1954–5, were accommodated in one large 'dormitory'.

The residential colleges made a joint appeal for the 50 per cent of the money they each required for their own separate construction, and a special appeal was made to the trade unions with the backing of the TUC. Construction work at both the Ruskin sites was done in 1965–7. A new block of student rooms at Headington was named Bowen House after Sir William Bowen, of the Union of Post Office Workers and the Workers' Travel Association, who had been a member of the Governing Council since 1923 and its chairman from 1947 until his death in 1965. In place of a second, similar block which

had been originally intended, the college purchased 'Stoke', a large house in 1½ acres of ground, adjacent to the Rookery. In addition the main Rookery building was extended by the addition of a new dining hall and a lecture theatre. This was named the Tawney Hall after R. H. Tawney, who had been associated with Ruskin from before the First World War. The name of the Headington site was also changed, from the Rookery to Ruskin Hall, thus reviving the original title of the college. The old stable block was named Smith House, to commemorate Ferdie and Sam Smith.

At Walton Street a new block was built containing a new kitchen and dining hall with student rooms above. A new block also provided a sports room, students' common room and a seminar room (the Elvin Room).

These various works were finished in 1967 on the eve of dramatic developments. In the previous twenty years the college's academic work had settled down to something of a routine. Most students now came for two years and sat the Oxford University Diploma in Economics and Political Science, a few taking the Diploma in Public and Social Administration. A small number took the Arts course and one or two followed special courses. Some students came to do research, one being W. E. Tate, who published the work he did on local history. The Trade Union Appeal Fund money was also used on occasion to finance students who attended in order to undertake research. Unusually, one in the mid-1950s was a postgraduate, C. Tsuzuki, from Japan, who was doing research on H.M. Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation.

Such special cases apart there is no doubt at all of the supremacy of the university Diploma for which most students prepared. The association between Ruskin and the university was indeed very close. One important example concerns the establishment of Nuffield College. Its founder, Lord Nuffield, wanted to create an institution which would link the university to the outside world. A. D. Lindsay, as Vice-Chancellor, took this up and Nuffield College became a graduate college in the social sciences. 'Lindsay used to speak of a link between the idea of Nuffield College and the idea of Ruskin College; one was a connection with the outside world because of its way of research, the other because its students came from practical working lives.'[88] The connection was through the study of industrial relations, which became the most popular sixth paper for Ruskin Diploma students. Allan Flanders, formerly of the TUC, was appointed University Lecturer in Industrial Relations, based at Nuffield, but there were no undergraduate examinations in the

subject. Flanders' view was that it could not properly be studied by someone with no practical experience in it.[89] This meant that his university lectures were attended mainly by Ruskin students as were the weekly seminars at Nuffield College which he and Hugh Clegg jointly ran. Indeed, what became known as the 'Oxford School' of industrial relations in the 1950s and 1960s consisted to a large extent of Nuffield dons and ex-Ruskin students who had graduated at Oxford University, as well as the Extra-Mural Delegacy.

Most teaching at Ruskin was done by a slightly increased number of college tutors. After Stephen Schofield retired in 1953, to be replaced by E. W. Cooney, Henry Smith was the only pre-war tutor in post. He had left school at the age of 13 for employment as a shop assistant, being blacklisted at 18 for his attempts at union organisation in his industry. He was a founder of the Portsmouth Young Socialist League and chairman of the local branch of the WEA. At the age of 27, in 1930, he won an adult scholarship to Oxford University, gaining a first in PPE. After research followed by lecturing at Liverpool University he came to Ruskin in 1937. He was one of that school of economists which developed socialist economic theory by using marginal analysis. Unlike most professional economists of the time he had read and understood marxism and had written on the subject. One of his courses at Ruskin was entitled, 'Marx, Marshall and Keynes'. In addition to his expertise in economic theory he readily applied it to practical problems. He was an advisor to governments overseas and was a strong advocate of the abolition of resale price maintenance, appearing as a witness before the Restrictive Practices Court. To Jack Ashley this 'cherubic economist' was a 'fine teacher'. In his lectures he 'stalked up and down the rostrum seeming to enjoy baffling students as he sprinkled lectures liberally with paradoxes'. He engendered enthusiasm among the students and 'Anyone who was unable to grasp a particular point would be invited to join him on a long walk to discuss the problem'.[90]

Among the other tutors of the 1950s were E. L. Ellis, who taught constitutional history, well-known to students for his booming voice, heard along the corridors from behind his closed door, as he corrected a student's error. Jay Blumler from America the politics tutor was soft-spoken and was an accomplished guitarist, ready to provide musical accompaniment for sing-songs. Alan Fox taught economics and industrial relations for a time. He had been one of the post-war generation of ex-service students at Ruskin, had gone on to take an Oxford degree and was a tutor at Ruskin from 1951 to 1957, being succeeded by John Hughes, formerly an extra-mural lecturer at

Sheffield University. John Hughes became Vice-Principal in 1970 on the retirement of Henry Smith, who celebrated the occasion, at his farewell dinner, by reciting

> Now is no moment to recall
> How much a college loses
> That having once been run by Smiths
> Now finds it's run by Hughes's.

Most students had served in the armed forces during the war or afterwards on National Service. They were accustomed to discipline and the many college rules were generally observed. They were expected to be in residence the whole term and only allowed one weekend's absence in the 10–10½ weeks. The study periods were 9–12 a.m. and 7–9 p.m. during which times radios and radiograms in the common rooms could not be played, nor were table tennis and billiards permitted. Radios and record players were not allowed in student rooms and typewriters were only to be used in the afternoons and after 9 p.m. No doubt these noise restrictions were in force because of the shared rooms and flimsy partitions between bedrooms, especially at Headington. All college activities ended at midnight and the front doors were locked. Students provided a duty porter for latecomers. A member of the opposite sex had to be out of a student's room by 10 p.m. There were dances on alternate Saturdays, shared between the two sites. The rule, first promulgated in 1899, prohibiting alcohol on the premises, was maintained, although winked at on the last night of term. This rule was later modified so that by the early 1960s there was a bar, provided by an outside caterer, at the fortnightly dances.[91]

There was more emphasis on student obligations than on student rights. The *Annual Report* for 1947–8 referred to an 'innovation', a joint meeting of staff and students to discuss courses of study and the teaching programme. But such formal meetings were unusual. Normally the Principal would consult the House Chairmen, one on each site; arrangements for regular staff-student meetings were to come later. Formal disciplinary and grievance procedures hardly existed and, this being an adult college, much was left to the students to deal with themselves. This would include disputes between students whether on political issues or as a result of personal frictions. In a residential college tensions arise, to be defused as quickly as possible. Moreover, from time to time, new activities emerged. In the late 1940s there was a Ruskin College Christian group, which held religious services. A few years later a number of

students sought to emulate the old Clarion Cycling Clubs by setting out for visits to Oxfordshire pubs, partly for the drink, partly to spread the message of socialism.

More regular events were the Sunday afternoon carols and other songs, held just before Christmas, and the summer garden party at Headington, attended by members of the Governing Council and which included organised games for the children of staff and students. On the Sunday before the University Diploma examinations a cricket match would be held in the village of Noke, where the Principal and his wife lived. At the end of each term there would usually be a concert arranged and performed by the students, including songs, sketches, and often satirical comments on members of staff, who might also take part as performers. The conclusion to the whole effort was the Diploma examination. On the first morning the candidates would congregate at the entrance to the Walton Street building wearing their dark suits and white bow ties, each wearing a rose provided by Beryl Hughes. Henry Smith would usually inspect them to make sure they were properly dressed. Students expected the staff to be present to wish them luck before they made their way to the Examination Schools.

There was a continuation too of the friendly ministrations of sympathetic middle-class Oxford people. This was a long tradition, originating at the start of the college's life. Edmund Stonelake describes how, in 1901, 'For our English reading lesson we went to the big house of a tiny lady . . . a well educated ageing spinster'.[92] Just after World War I George Hodgkinson would have tea with the Misses Darley, the elder being a 'very nice person, keenly interested in the Labour Movement', but, according to Hodgkinson 'so simple in her outlook on life'. Her Ruskin visitors tried to explain about strikes and other labour matters. 'We gave her some information about Bolshevism.' Hodgkinson noted that, 'Some of the boys here do not like the fraternising business and look with suspicion on all the advances the good lady makes,' yet one of the students married the younger Miss Darley.[93] From the late 1920s this hospitality was undertaken gladly by Ruth and Rosemary Spooner, the daughter and the niece of the famous Dr Spooner of New College. For over forty years they invited Ruskin students to tea at which they provided a brief concert of piano music. It was not unusual too for members of trade union summer schools, using Ruskin's premises, to be invited for such entertainments. Completely absent was any element of patronising disbursement of social obligation. They positively enjoyed it. When they left Oxford in the summer of 1969 they

generously gave their house in Polstead Road to the college. It was transformed into married student accommodation.[94]

In 1981 members of the Ruskin Fellowship of old students were asked, in a circulated questionnaire, to characterise the atmosphere of the college during their period of study. Was it, they were asked, paternal or authoritarian? The answers, from students whose residence at the college ranged from the early 1920s to the late 1970s varied, but most denied it was either. Yet, with hindsight, the appropriate adjective does appear to be paternal. Even though staff and students were on first name terms in the post-war period (not necessarily before 1939), and despite the constant informal consultation that went on, most decisions were made for students. One of the several changes of the 1960s was the change towards a greater degree of formal democracy and a greater air of equality.

Part of the explanation for the change was the different type of student. Ruskin had always selected students who had been active in some kind of public life, but now, typically, students had been shop stewards, accustomed to dealing with employers in their factories and offices. While some students certainly welcomed their period of study as a break from the daily round of dealing with problems, and were ready to accept the college routine and atmosphere, they could not lay aside the experience which they had accumulated. The trigger for the developments of the 1960s was not specifically to do with Ruskin, but was a reflection of the worldwide student revolt, the centrepiece being the May 1968 Paris students' uprising. There had been proposals before this for student involvement in the government of their colleges and universities (e.g. by the National Union of Students); an added dimension was the political consequences of the Vietnam War. One result was a new interest in marxism and a proliferation of marxist sects. Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford was suddenly full of publications on marxism.

Ruskin was caught up in these developments, but with its own special features, for some of the student demands were not applicable. One student, Tom Morris, took a year off, with the aid of a Sir William Bowen travelling scholarship, to study at Grenoble University, and was there in May 1968. On his return he described how he told the students about the tutorial system. He reported how the French students 'thought that this represented an ideal system which some day they might be able to work towards'. (He had already experienced a gasp of astonishment when, at the end of the first lecture he attended in France, he rose and asked the lecturer a question.)[95] The particular aspects of the student ferment at Ruskin

were to do more with the college's traditional connection with the labour movement and with the wider question of the college's objectives. Whatever their individual motives for deciding to come to Ruskin in the first place, most students undoubtedly wanted to serve the labour movement in some way after their studies were over. It was most uncommon for them to do so by returning to their own jobs—some of them had taken up their studies in order to get away from tedious and repetitive work. Nor were there many posts available to them in the labour movement, although some certainly became trade union officers. Many went on to teacher training courses to become lecturers in the further or adult education fields. An increasing number after the war had gone on for further study at universities. With the expansion of higher education after the Robbins Report of 1963 many more were able to do so.

It is legitimate to argue that such academic achievement was a demonstration of the college's educational success, and that it was unrealistic, and always had been, to expect the students to go back to their old jobs. Nevertheless the instinctive reaction of some Ruskin students was one of repulsion. Ruskin students should not go on to a university—especially to Oxford—and those who did were betraying their class, guilty of the sin of social mobility. Attitudes like this were not new; they had been present throughout the college's history. But now they provided a specific dimension to the disputations of the late 1960s and for a few years after that, distinguishing Ruskin from the wider student revolt.

The college had in any case been experiencing change before this of varying degrees of importance. Student research was encouraged by the provision from the early 1960s of an annual Labour History Prize in memory of G. D. H. Cole. In 1963 a new one-year course was instituted for residential child care workers and the following year the TUC took over the college's 65-year old provision of correspondence courses (along with the TUC's absorption of the NCLC and the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee, thus bringing to an end the long institutional conflict between two approaches to education which had followed the 1909 strike). The Oxford University Diploma regulations were amended to become more flexible, with more choice of subjects.

If any particular year can be identified as marking the onset of major changes at Ruskin it was 1967. There were three independent developments: Raphael Samuel, appointed in 1964 as a tutor in sociology and social and economic history, instituted his History Workshop, which came to be an annual gathering of workers,

students and historians. Among its various objectives was that of encouraging workers to undertake historical investigations, with strong emphasis on oral evidence. John Hughes produced a scheme for a new Diploma course in Labour Studies, to be examined within the college and not by an outside body. And the students collectively put forward a whole series of demands for changes within the college.

All had an impact on the college, in their different ways. The various student demands were met, in the first instance, by the establishment of a joint working party of staff and students. This asked for and received evidence and opinions from the whole college and produced a report which was discussed by a full college meeting in March 1968. Out of that and subsequent discussion student participation in college government was achieved by the establishment of a whole range of joint committees with both academic and non-academic functions and responsibilities. These bodies took the place of the more informal consultations of the past, even though these did not die out. Now, from the late 1960s, the practice was for more formal agreement on the various issues. There was more talk of negotiation and of references by the students to 'the management'. The students, for their part, while continuing their separate House structures, joined together as the Ruskin Students' Association, later renamed Ruskin Students' Union. Both staff and students obtained representation on the Governing Council and the Executive.

The new Diploma course in Labour Studies was first made available to students in the next session, beginning in October 1968. It was intended to meet the needs of those who saw their future in the labour movement and its emphasis was on subjects relevant to that objective, but it was intended to be equal, in academic content and level, to the Oxford University Diploma. A major innovation was in its assessment methods. Instead of a Diploma based on traditional three-hour invigilated examinations all taken at the end of the course, students on the Labour Studies course took final examinations during the course, thus building up 'credits'. Moreover, the actual examination method was more flexible. Students could decide which type of examination to take: they could opt for the traditional three-hour kind, or they could choose 'open-book' examinations, usually lasting 48 hours. And, especially important, one of the examinations was the submission of a research thesis, of some 15–20,000 words, the work being done in one term. This thesis was orally examined.

Despite this new Diploma meeting some of the student demands,

very few opted to take it at first, most remaining with the University Diploma. A major reason was that it was a risk. A new educational qualification was unknown, and there was no evidence that the outside world would recognise or accept it.

Within a few years, however, this was to change, and more new internal Diplomas were introduced—in History, Development Studies, and Literature—each with its own regulations, not necessarily adopting the Labour Studies format. Another internal Diploma, Applied Social Studies, was also different. It replaced the one-year Residential Child Care Course and was financed by the Department of Health and Social Security. Its syllabus had to be approved by an outside body, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. The Diploma carried with it the vocational Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. Although a departure from non-vocational liberal studies its aim was in line with Ruskin's objectives, for it provided an avenue for working-class students into social work.

It is interesting to reflect that these new Diplomas were introduced on staff initiative, with only a limited amount of prior discussion with the students. Indeed, while the new college organisational arrangements were settling down, student pressure was primarily aimed at the college administration, i.e. in practice at the Principal. There was little demand to alter the content of courses; much was devoted to talking about methods of assessment. This was soon to change. In 1971 there was a student 'Dissatisfaction Committee' and two years later the RSA produced a policy document *Guideline '73*. It proposed a number of changes including having one Diploma rather than several, and the abolition of examinations. However, the pamphlet argued that 'the question of content of courses is the most important aspect of the current controversy'. It argued that all subjects 'should be properly balanced between pro-socialist and pro-capitalist outlooks'. In addition there should be subjects with socialist themes.

Intensive discussions between staff and students followed. Student hostility to the University Diploma was a major feature—despite the fact that many students still followed that course of studies—and the major consequence was the establishment of a further internal diploma, broadly intended to parallel that of the university. This college Diploma in Social Studies was introduced in 1974. Perhaps the most significant feature about its introduction was that this was the first time that a course had come about as a result of joint discussions between staff and students. The discussion had taken in

all possible aspects—subjects of study as well as assessment methods. As against the University Diploma, as it then was, the new college Diploma had a tighter structure, based essentially on a two-subject course. After various changes the assessment method remained traditional, with three-hour invigilated examinations, except that some could be taken during the course, and tutorial work and oral examinations could be taken into account.

This rather prosaic summary necessarily conceals a great deal. Words like 'student demands' and 'discussions' cover some bitter episodes of verbal confrontation. There were differences between staff and students; the staff included those who were sympathetic to and assisted the students; and there were differences within the student body where different political sects proliferated. Yet unlike in many other educational institutions such conflicts led to only one major overt dispute. In 1974 there was a two-day student sit-in, during the time that the college proposals, agreed between staff and students, were being considered by the relevant university committees to see if they could be adopted by the university. The students gained the impression (wrongly) that the college was altering the proposals and thus reneging on its agreement with the students.

In any case the new college Social Studies Diploma, broadly parallel to the University Diploma, was introduced in 1974 and soon many students were taking the college course which together with the Labour Studies Diploma became the two most popular courses. This clearly reduced for the time being the long association with the university.

Behind it all was a changed atmosphere and set of attitudes. This can be illustrated in several ways. One could include the growing informality, a development with a very long history. Before 1914 it was not unusual for the tutors to wear academic dress, at least in the formal group photographs of the period. This was as expected. Even R. H. Tawney, the enemy of emblems of status and honour, wore a gown at his pioneering university tutorial class in Rochdale in 1908, a class famous in the history of adult education.[96] The celebrated photograph of the Ruskin strikers of 1909, sitting outside the college with their belongings, shows them wearing dark three-piece suits, some with watch-chains on their waistcoats, with high stiff collars and ties, two of them with bowler hats, two others wearing straw boaters, and other boaters in view.

Up to the Second World War modes of address remained formal both between staff and students and between students. 'Dear Sir and

Bro . . . is what we called each other when I was a student at Ruskin College from 1924–26,' wrote Stanley Wilson, 'that is except on special occasions, when it was Dear Comrade.' As often as not students addressed each other by their surnames.[97] But well before the student revolt it was all a first-name relationship.

More usefully perhaps the changes can be demonstrated by a number of incidents. An early indication was one at the college meeting of March 1968, held to consider the report of the working party on student demands. The members of the working party assembled on the stage of the Buxton Hall, Bill Hughes, as Principal, taking the chair. Immediately, Stan Thorne, one of the student audience—later a Member of Parliament—proposed that the Principal be removed from the chair and someone else be elected. The somewhat surprised and nonplussed chairman ruled the motion out of order, but some years later, when recalling the incident, he remarked, 'If they didn't do it these days I'd wonder what was wrong with them.'

Another example was in 1976, when the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, came to lay the foundation stone for further buildings at Headington. The student body used the occasion for a formal protest against the government's cuts in public expenditure, and festooned the buildings with posters deploring the government's actions.

Yet, in retrospect, the conflict which all these various changes in attitude engendered did not lead to persistent and overt disputes as occurred elsewhere. The student body contained many who were accustomed in industry to using agreed grievance procedures constitutionally, and the Principal, too, well understood the nature of institutionalising conflict. Thus the official programme for the Prime Minister's stone-laying visit in 1976 included provision for a student deputation to one of the junior ministers present, and the banners were displayed by joint agreement. And there was co-operation as well as conflict. Thus in the late 1970s—to take one example—the Ruskin Students' Union volunteered to provide funds annually for student bursaries, to match an equal sum from the college.

The 1976 government expenditure cuts are a reminder of the different economic circumstances of that time and later. Before then, the talk was of expansion and improvement in adult education. Bill Hughes, as Ruskin Principal and President of the WEA, was a member of the Russell Committee on Adult Education. Its report, published in March 1973, suggested inter alia that the long-term residential colleges modernise their buildings with capital grant assistance from the Department of Education and Science. This was

done in the next few years and a new block was built at Headington, together with conversion of the old stable block, once the women's hostel. This latter now became a student centre with teaching and office accommodation. The student block was named the Cyril Plant Building, after the chairman of the governors. (The students wanted to call it Biko House after Steve Biko, the black South African leader murdered by the South African police. This was not in accordance with the convention that rooms and buildings be named after people associated with the college, and in practice both names, Plant and Biko, came to be used.)

A second stage of this development was at Walton Street where a number of old cottages were replaced by a new building for student accommodation, with a seminar room, and a new library complex to replace the Walkden Library whose facilities were now too small to meet the growth in the college's needs.

One other recommendation of the Russell Committee had also been rapidly adopted by the Labour Government of 1974–9. From 1974 students at the long-term residential colleges obtained mandatory grants from the Department of Education and Science (and the appropriate Departments for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The immediate effect was to solve the problems associated with the variable, discretionary awards of local authorities. In the longer-term their value can be seen when viewed against the severe financial problems experienced by local authorities in the late 1970s and later. One consequence of those difficulties was the virtual abandonment of discretionary grants by many local authorities, a practice which would have seriously affected the ability of adult students to attend the residential colleges. The student grants paid directly by the DES prevented that from happening. However, that development, favourable to the college as it was, meant that a high proportion of its income came from one source, making it vulnerable to possible changes in government policy. It was also important that the new grant system applied only to students who had been resident in the UK for three years. It did not affect students from overseas countries, outside the EEC. From the 1960s the fees charged to overseas students had, by order of the DES, been higher than those for home-based students. From 1980 this differential was increased so that their fee, at all higher educational institutions in the UK, had to cover the full cost, amounting to some three times the UK student fee. Obviously sponsoring bodies could not afford to send the same number of students as before. However, Ruskin was enabled to continue in its role as an international college by the provision of

funds from the Nuffield Trust which allowed a group of Commonwealth trade unionists to attend the college for one term a year. The first of these courses was held in 1982.

Research Work and Trade Union Education

This brief history covering more than eight decades cannot hope to refer to all the events about the college, but some other areas of activity need to be considered. The college is essentially a teaching institution and the majority of students attend to take a systematic two-year Diploma course. Some come for shorter periods and some take special, tailor-made courses. The college also has connections with the trade union movement and although the absorption of its correspondence courses by the TUC brought an end to one important association, others took its place. One, in 1960, before the correspondence course changes, arose out of the growing interest in trade union education and the need for experienced tutors and for introducing trade union officers to relevant teaching techniques. A conference was held at the Rookery in 1960 and subsequently schools were held for trade union officers, and courses in teaching methods began for Ruskin students. During the 1960s, in association with the TUC, courses were held for full-time trade union officers and also for lecturers in industrial relations in Further Education colleges. These courses were succeeded in the 1970s by programmes of four-week advanced courses for experienced shop stewards, held in association with the TUC.

Another service for the trade unions began in 1970 with the inauguration of the Trade Union Research Unit which, although housed at the college, is a separate institution organisationally and financially. Its funds come from trade unions and the Unit undertakes two main functions: specific research for individual unions, notably for collective bargaining purposes; and research on general matters of interest to unions. Another expansion into research into the effects of new technology was financed by the Social Science Research Council.

A further activity, more in line with the college's teaching role, was the establishment in 1976 of the Trade Union International Research and Education Group, whose aims include the promotion of education and research on international issues as they affect workers in their roles as both producers and consumers. A major method is the provision of audio-visual material for trade union schools and courses. The productions of all these various research units have also been useful additions to the resources of the college for its own internal teaching.

Assessment

Too often the published histories of institutions, especially those written from the inside, suffer from an orgy of self-congratulation, but an account of Ruskin College which did not expose the persistence of controversy about its purposes, methods and achievements would be bland to the extent of dishonesty. Because of its objectives and associations the college has inhabited two worlds: the academic on the one hand and the labour movement on the other. These two could easily conflict with each other but a collision has usually been avoided. It is easy to understand, though, why, among those interested in the college, diverse and opposing opinions are sometimes held. To some it is a place which takes eager trade unionists and those not already Conservatives or Liberals are turned into political moderates or even reactionaries. A 'socialist graveyard', it is said. Others however regard it as a hot-bed of revolution. Anecdotal evidence, based on individual cases, is produced in evidence. The absence of comprehensive information gives plausibility to such statements. Where systematic study has been made neither view is supported. Jay Blumler's investigation of 180 students, embodied in his 1962 Oxford D.Phil. thesis, came to the conclusion that 'although some students become less radical during the course, others became more radical'. This is not especially surprising. Education is intended to open students' eyes, to encourage them to question received opinions and to explore unfamiliar ideas as well as to strive for good academic standards. Whatever the effect on individual political and social views, a student who is not affected in some way would be at worst a bigot and at best ineducable.

It is certainly true that most students do not return to their original occupation. The founders hoped that they would and the claim was often made before 1914 that they did go back. It was too bold a claim then; it has been inapplicable for recent decades. Often it is said that Ruskin has become a prep. school for university. The diction normally indicates disapproval, although many might mark as a success the fact that working-class students are enabled through their Ruskin experience to proceed successfully to degree courses. There is something to be said in favour of the view that 'nothing is too good for the proletariat' and that they should participate in the best in the academic world. As education should encourage deeper thought and thus risk altering political attitudes, so it may also result in upward social mobility.

Yet that is not the full story. It would be very easy to give a list of

those former Ruskin students who have realised the often-stated desire when they apply to come to the college to work within the labour movement. Allowance must be made for the incompleteness of such lists, but they provide some evidence. One, *Ruskin College: activities of some former students*, published in support of the 1936 appeal for funds, gave a total of 111 names, in the following general categories. 17 MPs and former MPs; 21 in education, almost all adult tutors but two were university professors (A. W. Ashby and G. W. Daniels);[98] 19 trade union officers, including three general secretaries; 13 officials of co-operative societies; 20 in social work; 6 in welfare; 4 journalists, including two former newspaper editors; 6 in the civil service; 4 in various jobs such as with the League of Nations Union and the Workers' Travel Association; and a solitary businessman—Frank Hodges who had at one time been General Secretary of the Miners' Federation. Ironically he had been one of the 1909 strikers and had been one of the first students at the Central Labour College.

The later careers of some in that list emphasise the general point. Thus George Woodcock became General Secretary of the TUC and John Fryd was to become General Secretary of the National Federation of Professional Workers. Among post-1945 Ruskin students we can readily find many trade union officials of all grades (including general secretaries, education and research officers) M.P.s, and numerous adult tutors. In its 1966 evidence to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations the college noted that in the years 1960–65 as many as 69 former students had obtained posts with the trade union movement and another 67 in the field of industrial relations, as lecturers, researchers or practitioners. A little later, when such unions as the National Union of Public Employees were expanding rapidly Ruskin students obtained posts as officials.[99] The presence of many ex-Ruskin lecturers in colleges throughout the country was undoubtedly a helpful factor in the great expansion of teaching in industrial relations and trade union studies. In a similar context it is noteworthy that in 1979 when Bill Hughes, the Principal, and Lord Plant, chairman of the governors, both retired, two of three senior posts came to be occupied by ex-Ruskin students. The new chairman was Derek Gladwin, Southern Region Secretary of the General and Municipal Workers' Union. The new Vice-Principal (appointed to fill the post vacated by John Hughes on his appointment as Principal) was W. M. Conboy, who had taken an Oxford University degree and had spent several years with the University's Department for External Studies.

The 1930s publication on former students referred also to the fact that 'a large number of ex-students are members of City and Borough Councils and other local governing bodies'. The great majority of former students are not famous. This is as it should be. Insofar as they are carrying out some form of public service, then Ruskin is doing what it was always intended to do. To repeat the words of the 1911 *Annual Report*: 'The value of the work of the college can not be tested by examinations, but only by the later careers—the characters, the work, the mental attitude—of its students.'

Yet the college is part of the academic world and as an educational institution it can be judged on other criteria. Most of its students pursue courses of systematic study which are examined and which attract paper qualifications. Success can be seen from the following facts. Men and women who had left school, usually at the minimum leaving age, some 10 to 15 years before (often regarding themselves as failures) are able within two years to get to grips with academic subjects and to pass examinations in them. Few drop out. Early on, Oxford University recognised the receipt of its Diploma as qualifying students for senior status in the university; and most other universities recognise the various Diplomas for admission to their degree courses, some allowing Ruskin students exemption from their first-year studies. Many students now do research projects, as part of their normal course-work, some of which have been considered worthy of publication and some have been taken up and used by trade unions.

Whatever view is taken of Ruskin College—and even those ex-students who are particularly critical describe their time as a 'great experience'—there is no gainsaying one fact. The college's impact and influence have been out of all proportion to its size, not least abroad in the newly-independent ex-colonial countries. Two examples will suffice. Kivukoni College in Tanzania was based on Ruskin and greatly assisted by it. And Ruskin's ex-students have made their mark in some of the new states, the late Tom Mboya of Kenya being one of the most notable.

It is evident from this history that Ruskin, like other institutions, has adapted to changing circumstances, the stimulus coming from a variety of sources. Internally, both students and staff have initiated change and new developments have occurred to meet external social and economic developments. From time to time the pace of change was very rapid, as just before the First World War, in connection with the 1909 strike; or in the late 1960s and 1970s when new Diplomas were introduced one after the other and 'satellite' bodies like TURU

and TUIREG were established. At the same time the college necessarily pursues its main objective: the promotion in a residential setting of liberal education for working-class adult students, recruited mainly from the trade unions. Men and women who, for whatever reason, were unable to take full advantage of their school years or who have come to realise their need for further education, are exposed to a variety of opinions to which they apply the academic skills that they acquire. What is sometimes called the 'Ruskin experience' is based on a close association between staff and students including, especially, teaching in small groups and the need to overcome confidence barriers which confront working-class students. Full-time residence is the necessary setting for this interaction. It also enables students to concentrate on their studies and to step back from their recent involvement in trade unionism, politics and social work of various kinds. Changes will continue to be made and these will be welcomed and accommodated. The basic ethos and tradition must remain.

Notes

1. *Oxford and District Morning Echo*, 12 December 1898, editorial.
2. Ross E. Paulson, *Radicalism and reform*, p. 148.
3. *Ruskin Hall News*, April 1900, pp. 61–2.
4. Ross Terrill, *R. H. Tawney and his times*, p. 25.
5. Richard Hofstadter, *The progressive historians*, part III.
6. Paulson, op. cit., p. 126.
7. Vrooman very quickly transferred the idea of a Ruskin Hall movement to America. Avalon College in Trenton, Missouri, became Ruskin College. In 1903 this merged with Midland University to become Ruskin University at Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Paulson, op. cit., pp. 162, 183n.
8. C. A. Beard, 'Ruskin and the babble of tongues', p. 372.
9. For his 80th birthday the Ruskin staff sent him a photograph of Ruskin Hall. He responded with his best wishes. *Daily News*, 6 February 1899, *Oxford Times*, 4 March 1899.
10. The full report of the meeting in the *Oxford Chronicle*, 25 February 1899, was reprinted as a pamphlet.
11. Harlan B. Phillips, 'Charles Beard, Walter Vrooman and the founding of Ruskin Hall', p. 188.
12. Paulson, op. cit., p. 119.
13. Amne L. Vrooman, 'A Ruskin Hall for women', *Young Oxford*, vol. 1, no. 8, May 1900, pp. 11–12.
14. The fees were soon raised to £52 p.a., at which figure they remained until 1919.
15. Paul Yorke, *Education and the working class*, pp. 6–8.
16. *The autobiography of Edmund Stonelake*, p. 75.
17. *Ruskin Collegian*, vol. 4, no. 6, December 1914, p. 101, obituary.
18. Ann J. Lane (ed.), *Mary Ritter Beard: a sourcebook*; letter from the Beards' daughter, Miriam Vagts, to David Horsfield, 19 July 1976.
19. Yorke, op. cit., pp. 10–11.
20. Strike Records, vol. 1, items 29 and 30.
21. Yorke, op. cit., p. 31.
22. House Committee Minutes, 16 January 1907, 15 January 1908.
23. This account of the strike is based mainly on Yorke, op. cit., pp. 27–37; W. W. Craik, *The Central Labour College*, pp. 72–8; Executive Committee Minutes; and Strike Records.
24. Craik, op. cit., p. 78.
25. *Annual Report*, 1909.
26. Craik, op. cit., p. 74.
27. Stan Rees, 'The famous strike at Ruskin', p. 152.
28. Yorke, op. cit., pp. 28–9.
29. Mary Stocks, *The Workers' Educational Association*, p. 40. For a note on the university reform campaign see José Harris, *William Beveridge*, pp. 76–81.
30. Craik, op. cit., p. 63.
31. Executive Committee Minutes, 31 October, 17 November 1908.
32. The sub-committee was set up on 17 November 1908 and its report was considered by the Executive Committee on 6 March 1909.
33. A typescript copy of the report is in Strike Records, vol. 1, item 69. It was reprinted as a leaflet with comments in favour of Hird: *ibid.*, vol. 2, item 123.
34. H. Sanderson Furniss, *Memories of sixty years*, p. 99.
35. Rees, op. cit., p. 155. He denies the statement in Furniss's autobiography that the students were dominated by a few extremists who demanded that only Marxian economics be taught.
36. Craik, op. cit., p. 61, states that he and a fellow student, Groves, saw two members of the Executive Committee in the spring of 1908 to press the case for independent working class education. They were told, he reports, that the constitution could not be changed because of the college's dependence on private benefactions. The EC Minutes contain no reference to such a meeting. This does not mean it did not take place, but it is possible that when he was writing his account some fifty years afterwards he may have been thinking of a meeting between himself and Groves with the EC about a proposed new rule: Yorke, op. cit., p. 29. The statement in Anne Phillips and T. Putnam, 'Education for emancipation', p. 22, that the college needed to safeguard its endowments of £265,000 is ridiculous. The college has never had any significant endowments. Before 1914 it had only one, amounting to £1,220 13s, the A. H. Clark Scholarship: House Committee Minutes 1 March 1907. None of this is to deny that the fear of losing the private donations did not concern some of the staff: Yorke, op. cit., p. 31.
37. Lees Smith was a Liberal M.P. from 1910 to 1918. He joined the Labour Party in 1919 and was a Labour M.P. for most of the time from 1922 to his death in 1941. In the second Labour government he was Postmaster-General and President of the Board of Education.
38. Thomas Jones, *Welsh broth*, p. 77. See a letter to Jones from Kenneth Leys with advice on this and other possible posts. National Library of Wales, T. Jones MSS, June 1909. I am grateful to E. L. Ellis for this reference.
39. See autobiographical note in Preface to Gilbert Slater, *Poverty and the state*, and a leaflet published on his appointment as Principal, in Strike Records, vol. 2, item 124. Some details are in John Attfield, *With light of knowledge*.
40. John Atkins, *Neither crumbs nor condescension*, pp. 56–8.
41. Board of Education, *Report of an inspection of Ruskin College, Oxford, held on 21st to 26th April 1913*, p. 8. It is likely that the academic standard of the Diploma before 1914 was not very high.
42. Executive Committee Minutes, 12 December 1917; 24 January 1918.
43. George Hodgkinson, *A shop steward at Oxford*, p. 10.
44. Executive Committee Minutes, 23 August 1919.
45. George Hodgkinson letters, 18 January 1920. Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS 23.
46. F. Smith, 'Valedictory'. Furniss, *Memories of sixty years*, p. 192, describes how she gave him the same advice.
47. Henry Smith, 'Ferdie Smith—fifty years' service'.
48. Notes by Jack Eames, June 1983.
49. Jack Ashley, *Journey into silence*, p. 70.
50. Stanley Wilson to the Principal, 30 January 1981.
51. Executive Committee Minutes, 28 July 1920.
52. Stanley Wilson, op. cit.
53. George Woodcock, 'Random recollections'.
54. Interview with F. B. Connolly, 31 January 1981. However, former students of different generations could recall no such description.
55. Sam Smith, 'The late Alfred Barratt Brown'.
56. F. R. Hitchens to H. Pollins, 9 March 1981.
57. J. H. Smith, From plough to college, pp. 107–8.
58. Woodcock, op. cit.
59. Interview with F. B. Connolly.
60. Harold J. Barnes to H. Pollins, 5 March 1981 and interview with H. J. Barnes by H. Pollins and David Horsfield, 13 April 1981.
61. Woodcock, op. cit.
62. At a farewell ceremony on her last day at the college.
63. For accounts of these proposals see Clive Griggs, *The Trades Union Congress and the struggle for education*, pp. 197–201; Craik, op. cit., pp. 137–44; A. J. Corfield, *Epoch in workers' education*, pp. 42–55; Margaret Cole, *A life of G. D. H. Cole*, chapter 13. Cole had been thought of as the prospective Principal of the TUC college.
64. Executive Committee Minutes, 8 April 1927.
65. Woodcock, op. cit.

66. Wilson, op. cit.
67. J. H. Smith, op. cit., p. 110.
68. Wilson, op. cit.
69. Cole, op. cit., pp. 205–6.
70. Hodgkinson, *A shop steward at Oxford*, p. 10.
71. Barnes, letter 5 March 1981.
72. ibid.
73. J. H. Smith, op. cit., p. 114. Nevertheless the Labour Club 'gave Ruskin students one of their few close links with the university': John Parker, *Father of the house*, p. 13.
74. Hitchens, op. cit.
75. Drusilla Scott, *A. D. Lindsay*, p. 166.
76. Connolly, op. cit.
77. Hodgkinson, op. cit., pp. 24–7.
78. Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes*, p. 23.
79. Executive Committee Minutes, 21 March, 14 July 1923 and correspondence between the Vice-Chancellor, Lewis Farnell, and the college. Farnell had started imposing restrictions on undergraduate clubs in 1921, to which many dons objected: Scott, op. cit., p. 91; Mary Stocks, *My commonplace book*, pp. 134–7. Ms. Judy Mabro, of the Ruskin College Library staff, is preparing a study of these episodes. Ten years later the university authorities refused to allow criticism of the Officers' Training Corps, and a 'Free Speech' meeting was held at Ruskin 'in open violation of the Proctorial ban' on protests at the refusal: *Oxford Times*, 3 November 1933.
80. Oxford and District Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, passim, Ruskin College Library; E. Burns, *The General Strike, May 1926*, pp. 156–7; Fred J. Kettle, Ruskin College and the general strike; Parker, op. cit., pp. 114–15; Cole, op. cit., chapter 14.
81. Wilson, op. cit.
82. Arthur Exell, *The politics of the production line*; John Brown, *I was a tramp*, part 5; Duncan Bowie, Radicalism, Socialism and Labourism in Oxford, pp. 226 ff.
83. John Fryd to H. Pollins, 1 March 1981.
84. Marxism was included, for example, in the PPE subject 'Political theory from 1760'. See the comments in Lord Pakenham, *Born to believe*, p. 80.
85. Fryd, op. cit.
86. Executive Committee Minutes, 18 April 1952.
87. Ashley, op. cit., p. 69.
88. Scott, op. cit., p. 237.
89. So he informed me on my appointment to Ruskin in 1964.
90. Ashley, op. cit., pp. 69–70.
91. This is based on Eames, op. cit., as well as on discussions with students of the period.
92. Stonelake, op. cit., p. 76.
93. Hodgkinson, op. cit., p. 9; George Hodgkinson, *Sent to Coventry*, p. 62.
94. Ruth Spooner, *Ruth Spooner's memories*.
95. Tom Morris to H. Pollins, 3 March 1981.
96. Terrill, op. cit., p. 41.
97. Interview with R. G. Betterton, 26 June 1981.
98. For an assessment of Ashby's career at University College of Wales, Aberystywth, see David Michael, 'Before Alwyn: early social thought, action and research in Wales'.
99. This evidence about ex-Ruskin students continuing to serve the trade union movement is a corrective to a statement by Ernest Bevin to A. D. Lindsay that 'they don't come back . . . because we don't want them back, bossing us around and telling us how to run the show'. Scott, op. cit., p. 127.

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